Strum Through the Darkness

MIKE STAX

MY SEARCH FOR CRAIG
and the
MYSTERY OF MAITREYA

From *The Andy Williams Show* and *The Monkees* to psychedelic loner...
The true story of a musical golden boy derailed by madness in '60s California.

Swim Through the Darkness

FOR ANJA

MIKE STAX

Swim Through the Darkness

My Search for Craig Smith and the Mystery of Maitreya Kali

"The past... moves like an ocean under our lives."
— Ross Macdonald

"Go down
Swim through the darkness
Strange things to find there
Thought pools making their reflections
Inside your mind there..."
— Craig Smith

Swim Through the Darkness

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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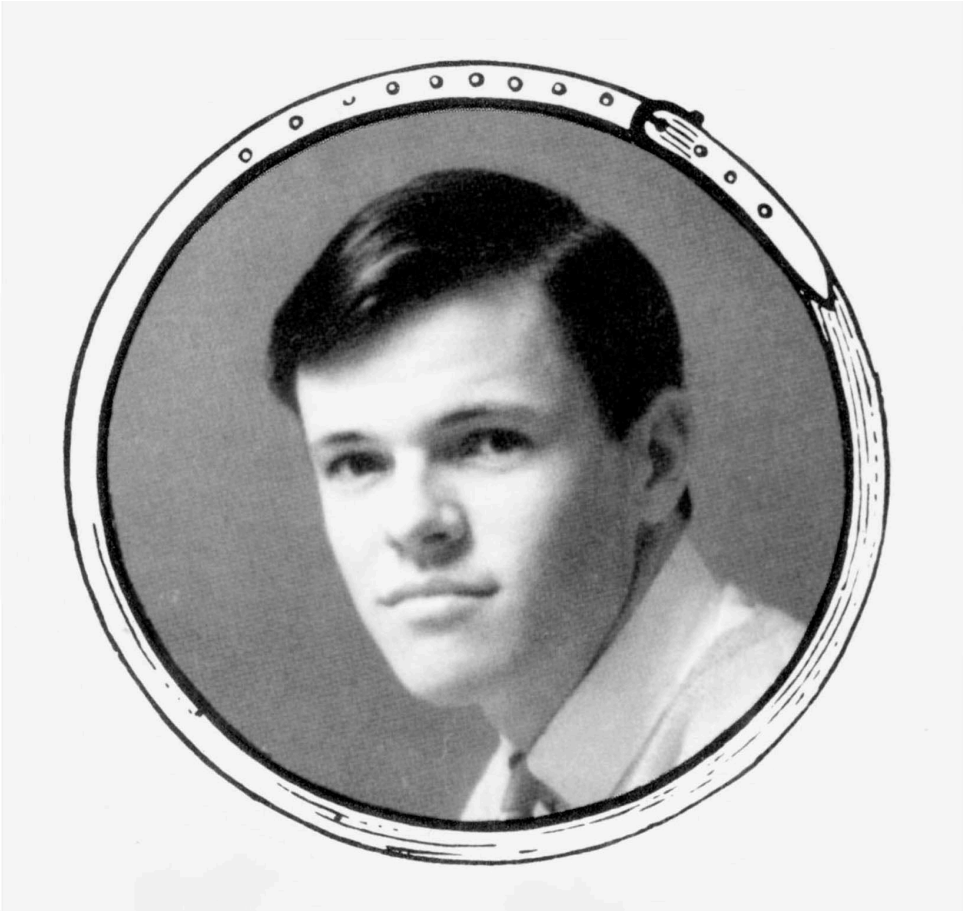
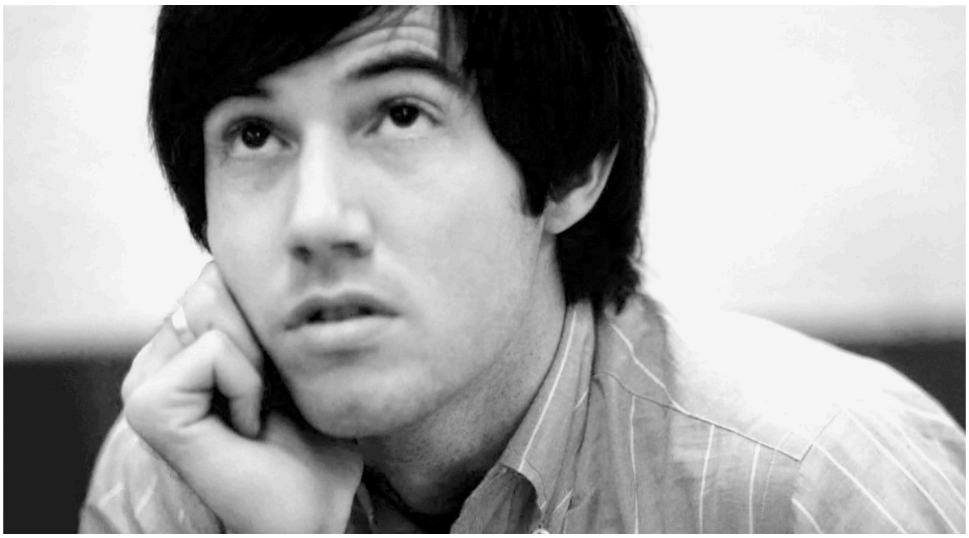


Craig Smith, 1964.



Chip Douglas, 1967 (Photo: Henry Diltz)

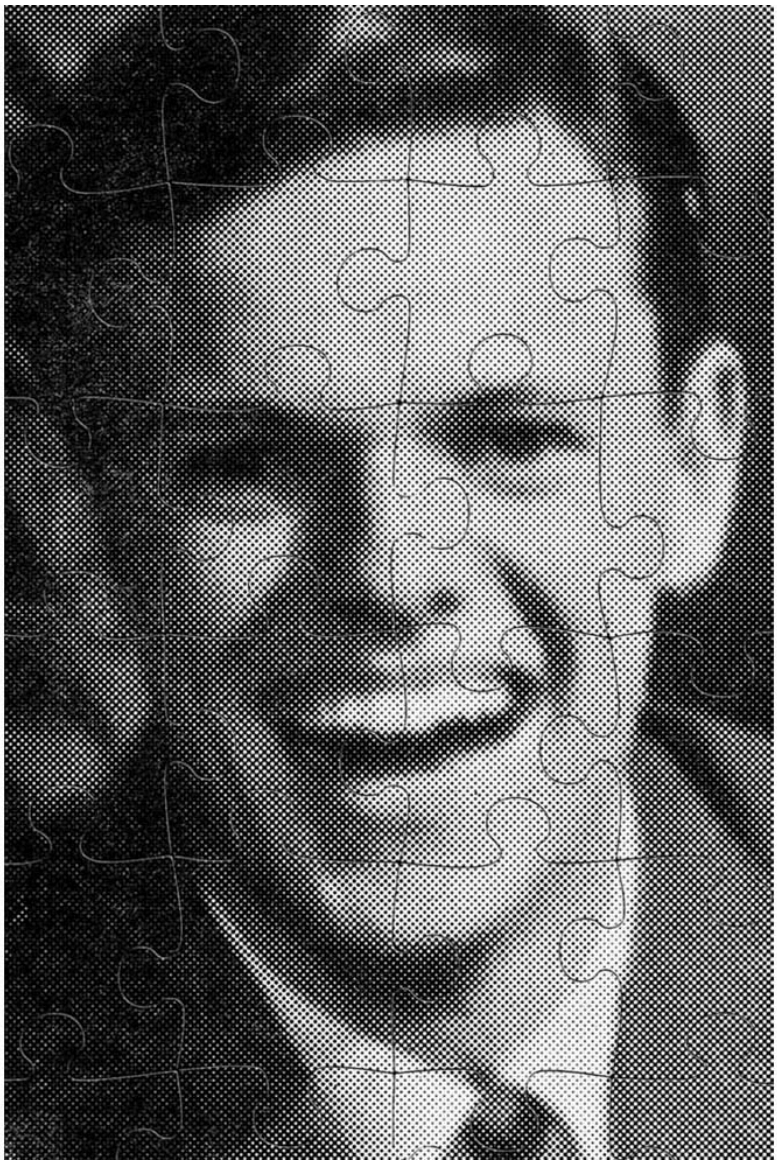
FOREWORD CHIP DOUGLAS

I remember very clearly the first time I saw Craig Smith. It was in 1967 at RCA Recording Studios in Los Angeles. Mike Nesmith of the Monkees introduced us. He was producing Craig at the time, and I was producing the Monkees. Mike wanted me to listen to one of Craig's songs, which became part of the Monkees' *Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn and Jones Ltd*. album. I was struck by Craig's young clean-cut good looks and that beautiful dazzling smile of his. He was so full of life and so full of music. What a great future this lad seemed to have before him.

It was about six years later that I last saw him, and it came as quite a shock. My friend Henry Diltz and I had stopped into a music store on Ventura Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles and this fellow walked in off the street with a copy of his album under his arm, which he offered to sell for five bucks. He had the look of someone who had definitely dropped out, all the way. His hair was long and scruffy, and there was a spider tattooed on his forehead right between the eyebrows.

I had no idea who he was. He recognized me however and told me his name, but added that he now called himself "Maitreya." The transformation was simply unbelievable. What could possibly have happened to that wholesome kid with the bright future?

Mike Stax has spent fifteen years gathering interviews and information. What follows is a searching account, disturbing yet sympathetic, of the life of this talented singer-songwriter and performer who underwent a strange drug-induced psychotic transformation from wholesome, smiling, nice kid, raised in a good home in California, to spending the last thirty years of his life a homeless, unkempt wanderer on the streets of Los Angeles.



Craig Smith, 1963.

INTRODUCTION

For rock music fans, the acid casualty is a cherished archetype. Syd Barrett, Roky Erickson, and Skip Spence are the three best-known examples. Psychedelic voyagers who sailed too close to the edge only to plunge into a permanent Alice in Wonderland world. Eccentric, childlike creatures or mystical shamans, stuck in a looped alternative reality that is forever ’67, ’68, ’69, the moment of their fall.

But when that carefully constructed fantasy is disassembled and the cold facts are laid bare, there’s no romance to be found. Only pain, confusion and misery. An undiagnosed predisposition toward mental illness, often hereditary, triggered by an overindulgence in hallucinogens, exacerbated by the tenuous, often chaotic nature of a musician’s life—the facts are strikingly similar in every case.

In the case of Craig Smith, there were other factors that contributed to his fall, as I learned when I investigated the story of his strange, complicated, and ultimately tragic life. It’s a story that took me over 15 years to assemble yet—to my eternal regret—will never be entirely complete. It is a story that begins in the safe, wholesome, sticky-sweet heart of American family entertainment and ends on the cold, dark streets at the outside fringes of society.

As he ambles down Ventura Boulevard, Craig Smith looks very much like a typical “homeless” person—shabby, unwashed clothes, scraggly, unkempt hair, sun-baked skin, and the tired, haunted eyes of a man who checked out of ‘normal’ society a long time ago. To passersby he’s just another of a legion of walking wounded who roam the streets and alleyways of America. To me he’s the missing piece of a strange, scattered puzzle I’ve been trying to assemble for more than a decade.

The missing piece? Strike that. Craig Smith *is* the puzzle.

There are an estimated 578,000 homeless people in America; around 82,000 of those are in Los Angeles County, where the climate is more conducive to living rough and sleeping outdoors. Every one of them has a story, though few would have the facility, much less the motivation, to tell it to you. Even if they did, it's doubtful any would have a story quite like Craig's. It's hard to believe it now, but once upon a time, everything was golden for Craig Smith. In the 1960s, he was a bright-eyed, all-American boy with a pitch-perfect singing voice and talent to spare. For almost three years, his eight-miles-wide smile beamed out of television sets across America on a regular basis. The songs he wrote were recorded by some of the biggest names in the entertainment business. And he had a rock group of his own, the Penny Arkade, featuring some equally talented young musicians. On the surface everything was golden—until his life took a sudden left turn into a terrifying darkness no one could ever have predicted.

In 2012, at the age of 67, Craig Smith should have been living quietly and comfortably on his songwriting royalties, not scraping by in poverty on the unforgiving streets of Los Angeles. How, when and why did it all go so horribly wrong?

That's the puzzle I've been trying to piece together, ever since 2001 when I first heard the albums Craig released himself in the early 1970s. But by then he wasn't Craig Smith anymore, he was Maitreya. Satya Sai Maitreya Kali. Privately released in an edition of no more than a few hundred copies—probably a lot less—those LPs were called *Apache* and *Inca. Apache* appeared as a single LP, and then together with *Inca* as a double album. The people who knew Craig personally at the time remember it only as a double LP. My own introduction to *Apache* and *Inca* came via an unlicensed reproduction on the German Shadoks label.

The amateurish homemade cover artwork was unusual, to say the least, with its quasi-mystical symbolism, incomprehensible liner notes, lists, dedications and quotes from the famous and the infamous. ("*Underground at Last. Maitreya is." — Adam West, Batman*.) Along with this confusing flood of words and names are shadowy vacation snapshots from Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Yosemite and the Galapagos Islands of a toothy hippie squinting into the camera or off into the distance. Inside the gatefold cover, more pictures, more cryptic prose, lyrics annotated and interrupted with seemingly random asides and associations. On closer reading,

Maitreya's dense, mystical, often disturbing typed notes are a manifesto, peppered with repeated references to Christ, Buddha, Krishna, LSD, sex, violence, meditation, yoga, famous musicians, and a woman called Cheryl.

His real world identity is revealed in the very first sentence of his manifesto: "*Craig Smith saved the planet, did you? He died for a righteous cause.*" The manifesto goes on to declare Craig Smith the new Messiah: "*Bow to Maitreya. Christ is Back. Right On! Schedule. Saturn will Legally wed Earth in 2000 A.D. Christ is me and no one else.*"

The music then would surely be as rambling, unhinged and unfocused as the words on the cover. Not at all. The songs are focused in crystal-clear symmetry, the musicianship is excellent, the vocals outstanding. The unexpected quality of the music ambushes me. Some of it takes my breath away.

Stylistically it's all over the place. Some of it sounds like the Byrds or the Buffalo Springfield, other songs are completely solo and acoustic, unerringly beautiful, haunting pieces that record collectors might dub "loner folk," and there's a couple of strange, partially electric numbers that are more difficult to get a handle on. Some of the songs are linked by pieces of dialogue, aural snapshots of his travels. This isn't just an album of music; it's a journal of some kind. A message to the future from a lost, self-deluded soul.

"*Compiled over a Ten year period of Agony,*" reveals the liner notes. "*I bring Music Thru a Dream. Magic is Me. Thru a Dream. Poor me.*"

Poor Craig Smith, the leper Messiah. Who was he? What happened to him? Where is he now? I needed to know. Using the bizarre prose on the album cover as my map, I set out to follow his trail. It was 2001 A.D. (one year after the wedding of Earth and Saturn); little did I know that 14 years later I'd still be trying to put together the scattered, impossible puzzle pieces of this man's life.

In a letter to Eudora Welty, the great detective novelist Ross Macdonald likened the past to a vast ocean moving beneath all of our lives. That analogy came to my mind often as I dived into the past in search of answers, clues, any scraps of information at all about this mysterious, apparently deeply disturbed musician about whom nothing at all was known beyond the strange notations on the jacket of an impossibly rare record. "Go down, swim through the darkness, strange things to find there," sang

Maitreya. “Be sure to follow your directions now, you might find your mind there.”

Or lose it.

What started as a research project to dig up information on an obscure cult artist turned into a seemingly endless journey into a dark, often impenetrable past, a search for answers that only seemed to turn up more questions, fueled by an idealist’s belief that a lost soul could somehow be found and pulled back into the light of day. In some ways, the search itself became the story.

What follows, then, is part music biography, part mystery, part detective story. The story of not only Craig Smith’s swim through the darkness, but my own.

The Jade Café on Hollywood Boulevard, 1937. / Inset: Peggy Lee, 1939.

1

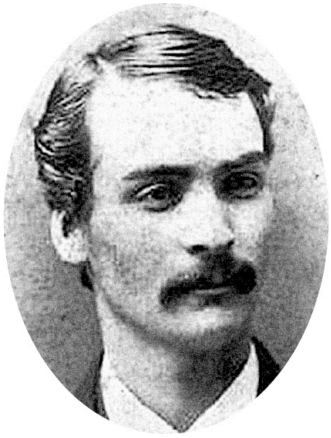
THE CITY OF ANGELS

This is Maitreya born in The City of Angels to fulfill the Prophecy.
Los Angeles forever Monorails glisten as Peace bows to Atomic
Subterranean Vaults Silence yet all pervading Bliss.

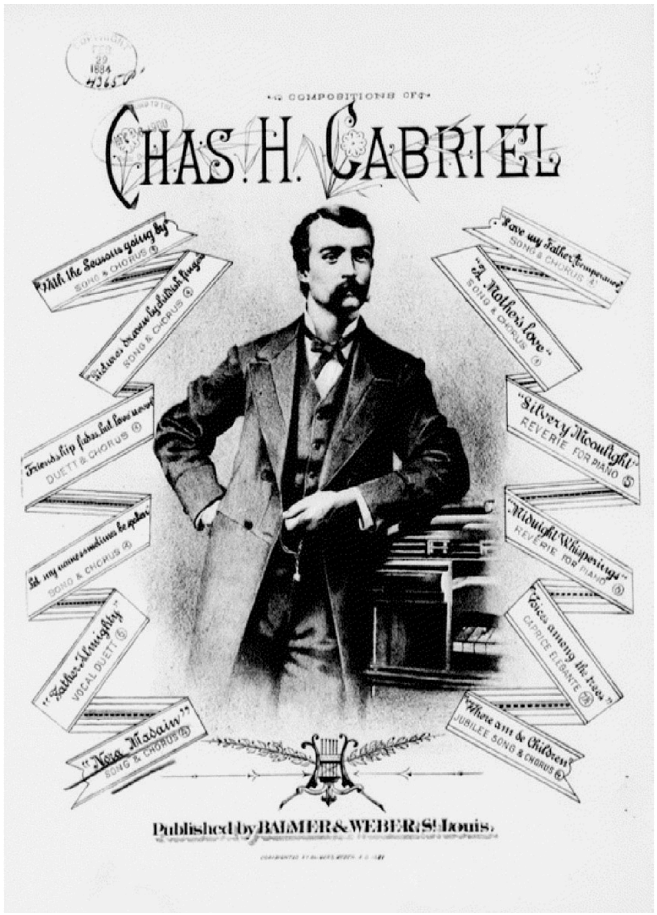
Craig Vincent Smith was born at Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital in Los Angeles on April 25th, 1945. He had two older brothers, Charles, born 1940, and Gary, born 1942. A sister, Deborah, came later, in 1950. At the time of Craig's birth, the family was living in a rented cottage on Vista Del Mar Avenue in Hollywood, two blocks east of the future site of the Capitol Records building and just a few hundred yards down the hill from the Krotona, the rambling Moorish-themed colony that was from 1912–26 the headquarters of the Theosophical Society, the esoteric religious movement founded in 1875 by the Russian-born mystic Madame Helena Blavatsky. Music and mysticism were part of the neighborhood scenery. As a teenager Craig would make his first records within blocks of his childhood home. And his later alter-ego, Maitreya Kali, was in part derived from Theosophist literature, as was the name he chose for his record label, Akashic Records.

Charles Gabriel Smith, Craig's father, was born in Chicago on November 29th, 1913, the third of four children, the others all girls. Before his second birthday the family moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, and by 1930 were living in Minneapolis where Charles' father, Alexander Smith, managed a department of the Juster Brothers men's clothing store. Charles' middle name was taken from the maiden name of his mother, Florence Sabrina Gabriel, and the genetic roots of Craig's musicality can be clearly

traced back to his ancestors in the Gabriel family. Craig's great-great-uncle (the uncle of his paternal grandmother Florence) was the renowned gospel songwriter and composer Charles Hutchinson Gabriel. Born in Wilton, Iowa, in 1856, Charles H. Gabriel is said to have had a hand in composing almost eight thousand gospel songs (often under pseudonyms), many of which appear in hymnals to this day. In addition to the gospel songs he was best known for, Gabriel also composed a number of marches and polkas, and wrote or edited numerous musical instruction books. Gabriel played several musical instruments, including reed organ, piano, violin and cornet. His most popular songs include "Higher Ground," "His Eye is on the Sparrow," "More Like the Master," "Dream of Fairyland," and "Glory For Me," some of which sold millions of copies as sheet music and in hymn books. Gabriel also composed the music for the famous hymn "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," which has been recorded by countless artists, including the Carter Family in 1935.



Craig Smith's great-great-uncle, Charles Hutchinson Gabriel, the renowned gospel songwriter;



A late 19th-century songbook of his work;

Charles H. Gabriel, Jr., also a successful songwriter.

Charles H. Gabriel died in Hollywood in 1932 at the home of his son, Charles H. Gabriel Jr., himself a songwriter, as well as a music teacher, journalist, magazine editor and radio station manager. Judy Garland sang

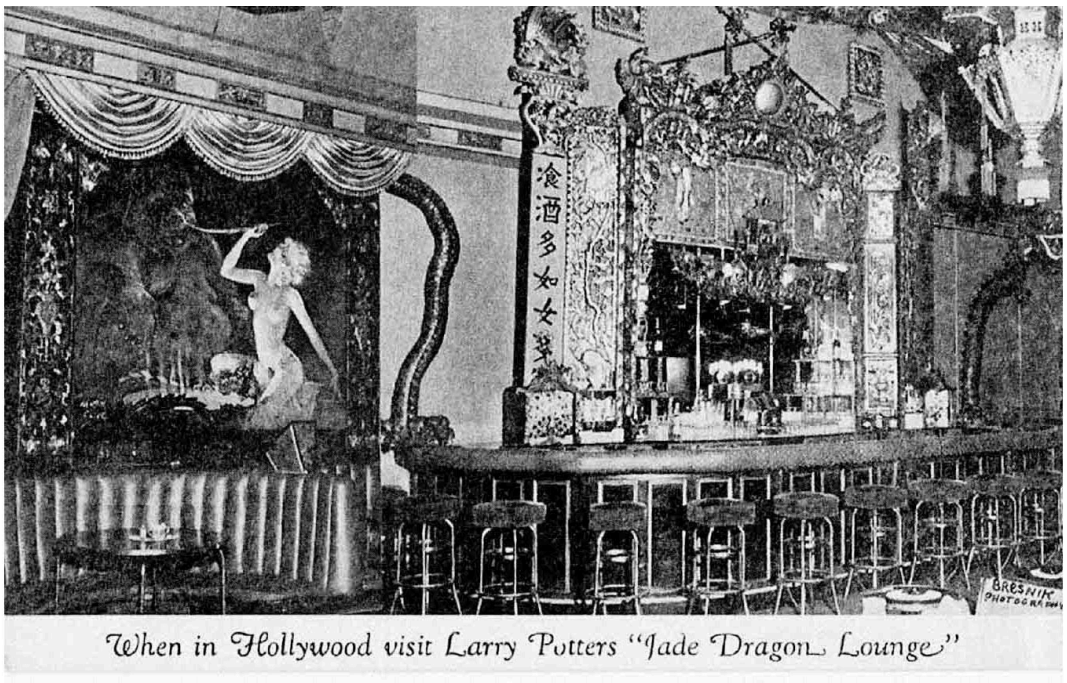
one of his compositions, “Brighten the Corner,” in her 1944 movie *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Gabriel Junior, Craig’s great-uncle, died in Los Angeles just two years after his father in November 1934. This was around the same time that Craig’s parents moved out to Hollywood from Minnesota.

Craig’s mother was born in Minnesota on July 7th, 1915 as Marguerite Marie Lundquist. Her father, Henry, was Swedish, and her mother, Irene, whose maiden name was Schwartz, was of German descent. Henry worked as a locomotive fireman for the Milwaukee & St. Louis Railway and as a truck driver for a number of different companies. After completing high school in Minneapolis, Marguerite found work as a clerk, most likely at the Munsingwear factory. Munsingwear was an underwear manufacturer—reportedly the largest in the world at the time, cranking out as many as 30,000 undergarments a day—and their workforce of around 3,000 was 85 percent female. Marguerite’s mother, aunt and, later, younger sister Harriet all found employment with Munsingwear, whose slogan was “Don’t say underwear, say Munsingwear.”

But Marguerite evidently had ambitions that extended far beyond the walls of the Munsingwear factory, and their celebrated line of “itchless” woolen undergarments. She dreamed of one day becoming a professional singer. It’s not known whether Marguerite ever sang in public while in Minnesota. Perhaps she tried out her talents during one of the Thursday lunch breaks, when Munsingwear brought in an orchestra to entertain its employees. What we do know is that by 1935 she’d become romantically involved with Charles Smith—Chuck to his friends—who himself had dreams of Hollywood glamour. Around the spring of that year, 21-year-old Chuck and 19-year-old Marguerite left Minneapolis and headed out to the West Coast together.

The couple’s activities for the next few years are not known, but presumably it took them some time to find their feet and start making any headway with Marguerite’s singing career. It’s not clear where Chuck’s ambitions lay, but he also appears to have been musically inclined. It’s been said he was a musician, a band leader, or even a songwriter, no doubt inspired by his uncle or great-uncle. Notably, by 1938—and likely as early as their move in 1935—the couple had each taken ‘professional’ names. Charles Smith and Marguerite Lundquist became Charles and Carole Barclay. Marguerite would go by the name Carole for the rest of her life.

The Los Angeles city directories for 1938 and 1939 show Charles Barclay living at 1817 Ivar Avenue, a couple of blocks north of Hollywood Boulevard, at the Parva-Sed Apta Apartments. Three years earlier, Nathanael West had written *The Day of the Locust* while living in this same shabby faux-Tudor rooming house, basing his characters on his fellow residents, most of who eked out a living on the lower tiers of the industry or nibbled around its outer fringes—scriptwriters, bit-part actors, vaudeville refugees, set builders, painters, pimps, prostitutes, flimflam men. West's bleak, cynical novel chipped away the brittle varnish of the Hollywood dream to reveal its seedy and hollow core. For the purposes of fiction, he renamed the apartment building Chateau Mirabella. "Another name for Ivar Street [sic] was 'Lysol Alley'," he wrote, "and the Chateau was mainly inhabited by hustlers, their managers, trainers and advance agents. In the morning its halls reeked of antiseptic."



Inside Larry Potter's Jade Dragon Lounge on Hollywood Boulevard, where Craig Smith's father worked in the late '30s and early '40s.

Chuck and Carole's neighbors along those antiseptic hallways included C- and D-list actors like Antrim Short, Lulu Mae Bohrman, Charlotte Field, and Dora Clement, who was starring at the time in the serial *The Phantom Creeps*, and soon afterwards would have a role in *Buck Privates*, Abbott &

Costello's debut feature. Lysol Alley may not have been particularly glamorous, but it was a convenient entry point into Hollywood's bloodstream. A ten-minute stroll took Chuck to his place of employment, the Jade Café at 6619 Hollywood Boulevard.

The Jade—also known as the Jade Room, Jade Dragon Lounge and the Jade Palace Café—was an opulently decorated restaurant and nightclub with an Oriental theme, one of several Los Angeles clubs owned by Larry Potter. "Vivid in Gold Leaf and Chinese Red Lacquer," the club's advertisements declared. "Dimly lighted . . . cool . . . restful. The finest of foods and liquors served in an atmosphere of Oriental Splendor." An elaborately carved wooden dragon curved around the bar, and the walls were hung with exotic paintings, the centerpiece being a large oil painting by Henry Clive depicting a seductive nude blonde tickling the nose of a smiling Buddha statue with a long red feather. Titled "Buddha-Pest," a version of the image also graced the club's matchbooks.

The Jade also offered "Continuous entertainment nightly" overseen by Chuck, who was the club's manager, producer and master of ceremonies. The Jade's entertainers included singers Mary Norman, Lillian Randolph, and the Brown Sisters, comedian Hal March (later the host of *The $64,000 Question*), dancer Louis DeProng, head-balancing act Bill and Dotty Phelps, and Jabuti, a statuesque redhead who played the slide trombone. It's likely that Carole, too, performed at the Jade during this period.

Another aspiring singer, Peggy Lee, had yet to turn 18 when she arrived in Hollywood from North Dakota in March 1938. After scraping a living for several weeks as a short order cook and a carnival barker, she showed up at the Jade one afternoon to audition. In her autobiography, *Miss Peggy Lee*, she describes hitchhiking to the club, her beach shoes falling apart as she walked the last few blocks. "Barefoot, I went in and auditioned for Chuck Barclay, the master of ceremonies," she wrote.

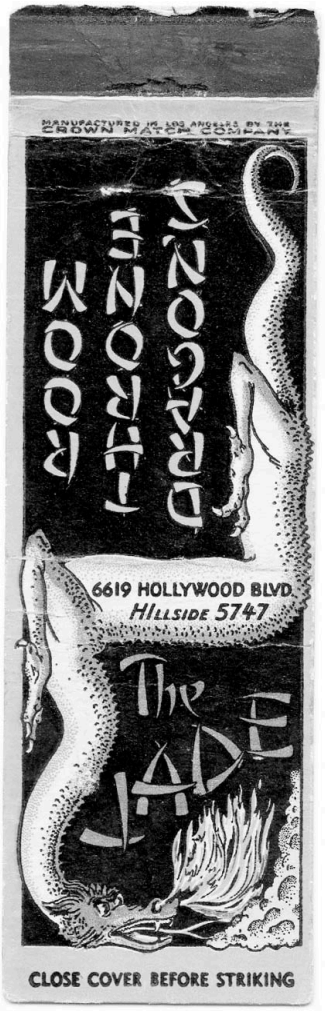
"Inside the Jade Room," she continued, "the darkness and the Oriental décor, the smell of the gardenias and Chinese food, the waitresses in their satin coats and satin pants moving silently about the thick carpet, carrying cooling drinks, egg rolls and butterfly shrimp, created an air of mystery… especially for a seventeen-year-old girl from North Dakota."

"Tall and terribly handsome," Chuck also made an immediate impression on her. "She sang a couple of songs and I liked her," Chuck later

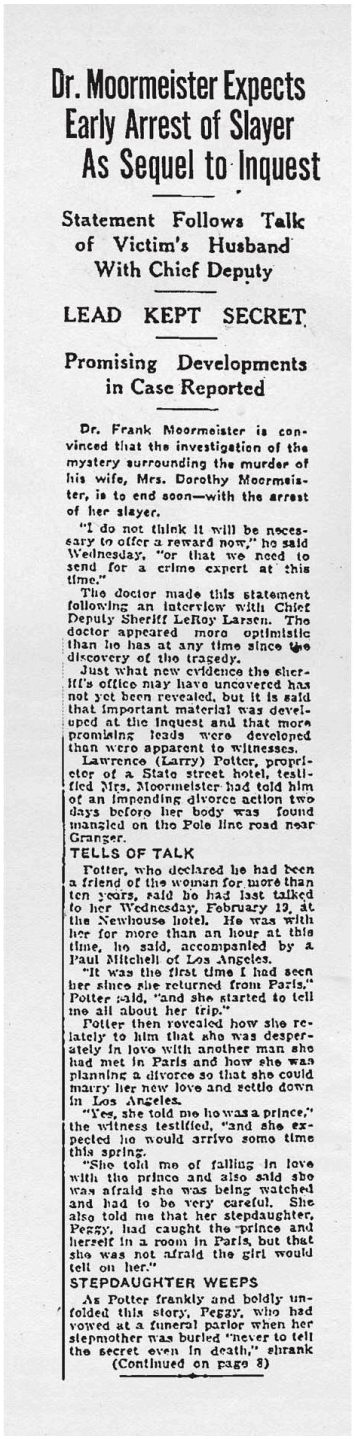
remembered, “and Mrs. Potter liked her. But Larry said we had plenty of singers. I hired her anyway.” Steve Boardner, later a famous Los Angeles restaurateur himself, was tending bar at the Jade at the time and also claimed to have played a role in the decision to hire Peggy Lee that day, but Lee always credited Craig’s father with giving her her first paid singing job in California. That job reportedly paid her $2.50 a night, 50 cents of which she was required to kick back to Larry Potter.

“She was a nice little kid,” Chuck recalled, “so we put her to work right then and there. She was broke. She’d spent her last money on carfare to come and see us. We fixed her up in a rooming house, and Mrs. Potter bought Peggy her first evening gown and a pair of slippers.”

Lee began singing seven nights a week at the Jade, accompanied by the club’s in-house pianist Phil Moore (later a successful arranger for MGM). She alternated spots with Mary Norman, who mentored the young singer, teaching her how to apply her makeup and helping her choose songs for her repertoire. After a short time, the club let Norman go and Lee was given top billing and an extra dollar a week. “Her red pleated gown was left behind,” remembered Peggy, “and I can only hope Mary went on to something better. She deserved it.”



Matchbook from the Jade, ca. late 1930s.



Dr. Moormeister Expects Early Arrest of Slayer As Sequel to Inquest

Statement Follows Talk of Victim's Husband With Chief Deputy

LEAD KEPT SECRET

Promising Developments in Case Reported

Dr. Frank Moormeister is convinced that the investigation of the mystery surrounding the murder of his wife, Mrs. Dorothy Moormeister, is to end soon—with the arrest of her slayer.

"I do not think it will be necessary to offer a reward now," he said Wednesday, "or that we need to send for a crime expert at this time."

The doctor made this statement following an interview with Chief Deputy Sheriff LeRoy Larsen. The doctor appeared more optimistic than he has at any time since the discovery of the tragedy.

Just what new evidence the sheriff's office may have uncovered has not yet been revealed, but it is said that important material was developed at the inquest and that more promising leads were developed than were apparent to witnesses.

Lawrence (Larry) Potter, proprietor of a State street hotel, testified Mrs. Moormeister had told him of an impending divorce action two days before her body was found mangled on the Pole line road near Granger.

TELLS OF TALK

Potter, who declared he had been a friend of the woman for more than ten years, said he had last talked to her Wednesday, February 19, at the Newhouse hotel. He was with her for more than an hour at this time, he said, accompanied by a Paul Mitchell of Los Angeles.

"It was the first time I had seen her since she returned from Paris," Potter said, "and she started to tell me all about her trip."

Potter then revealed how she relately to him that she was desperately in love with another man she had met in Paris and how she was planning a divorce so that she could marry her new love and settle down in Los Angeles.

"Yes, she told me he was a prince," the witness testified, "and she expected he would arrive some time this spring.

"She told me of falling in love with the prince and also said she was afraid she was being watched and had to be very careful. She also told me that her stepdaughter, Peggy, had caught the prince and herself in a room in Paris, but that she was not afraid the girl would tell on her."

STEPDAUGHTER WEEPS

As Potter frankly and boldly unfolded this story, Peggy, who had vowed at a funeral parlor when her stepmother was buried "never to tell the secret even in death," shrank

(Continued on page 8)

The Jade's owner, Larry Potter, was implicated in a high-profile murder case in Salt Lake City. *Salt Lake Telegram*, January 21, 1931.

For all its gold leaf and "Oriental Splendor," the Jade Room harbored some seriously dangerous criminal elements, as Peggy Lee would soon learn. It was the kind of place where "you might see a movie star, a G-man

or someone looking for a tourist he could 'roll'," remembered Lee. "I was to learn that expression meant to relieve someone of their bankroll, or at least I thought that was what it meant. You don't soon forget seeing a confused, stumbling man weaving out the door into the night, wondering where his money had gone."

The Jade's criminal reputation was well known to the FBI. According to their files, Potter was the front man for a small empire of Los Angeles clubs, all of somewhat dubious reputation. Potter had had numerous run-ins with the law going back to as early as 1913, when he was detained by police in Honolulu on "white-slaver" or pimping charges. He was subsequently deported from the island. After a few years in San Francisco he settled next in Salt Lake City, Utah, where he ran a notorious vice operation out of the Fairmount Hotel during the Prohibition era, and was indicted several times on pandering charges relating to underage girls. Then, in 1930, he became entangled in the investigation of one of Utah's most notorious unsolved homicides.

On February 21st, 1930, 32-year-old Dorothy Moormeister was brutally slain, her skull fractured with a large rock and her corpse run over repeatedly by her own car until every bone in it had been broken. Moormeister, the wife of a prominent local surgeon, had been embroiled in a romantic affair with a mysterious Persian prince, and had plans for a movie career in Hollywood. Potter, described by the newspapers as "a man about town," was with the victim two days before she was killed, along with an alleged L.A. racketeer by the name of H. Paul Mitchell. "The three of us had a drink together," Potter testified at the inquest. "Then we took a ride in her car for half an hour. She told me she was desperately in love with another man, that she was going to get a divorce and marry him, and settle down in Los Angeles." A notebook found among the victim's possessions indicated that she had an appointment to meet with Mitchell on the evening of her death, but Potter insisted his Los Angeles business associate had left town 12 hours before the murder. "It would not be embarrassing for *me* to say what is Mitchell's business," Potter quipped on the stand, "but it might be embarrassing to *him*." The investigation stalled and the murder remained unsolved, but, decades later, in 1964, the case was reopened after an inmate in a Texas jail, Will Sadler, confessed to the killing, and named the man who'd paid him $500 to carry out the hit: Larry Potter. It was later

determined that Sadler had made up the story after learning the details of the case in a detective magazine. The case remains unsolved.

Potter's actual role in the murder, if any, has never been determined, but his racketeering activities continued in Salt Lake and Ogden, where his name was frequently in the newspapers in connection with prostitution, gambling, and the sale and trafficking of illicit liquor. After being arrested in a raid at the Fairmount Hotel in January 1931, Potter glibly described his occupation to police as "capitalist, retired." "With the aforementioned Mr. Potter were various myrmidons whose multifarious functions keep them engaged until the small hours of the morning," reported the *Salt Lake Telegram*, "together with a group of women who habitually affect the particular type of hotel in which he is interested—financially." Everyone knew Potter's game, but criminal charges never seemed to stick, prompting letters to the newspapers from outraged Salt Lake citizens asking, "Does he run the entire police department and what sort of power has he that makes him immune?" The vice king's infamy in Salt Lake was so great that one concerned correspondent wondered how long it would be before the chamber of commerce changed the name of their "fair city" to Potterville: "It would seem so very appropriate." Mounting pressure from the public eventually prompted a crackdown on Potter's activities in Salt Lake, spearheaded by Mayor John F. Bowman, and an attempt by Potter to shift his operations to Ogden was met with similar opposition there. Feeling the heat in Utah, he relocated to Los Angeles in 1935—the same year Chuck and Carole arrived from Minnesota.

It is unlikely that Chuck knew anything of his employer's shady past, but no doubt he was aware of the nefarious elements lurking in and around the Jade. He made it his business to protect the vulnerable Peggy Lee. In her autobiography she describes Chuck as "the greatest big brother anyone could have. Well, second greatest," she added, next describing an incident that happened one night after she'd finished her set.

According to Lee, Potter was at the bar with a gentleman she'd never seen before and invited Peggy to join them. Soon afterwards Potter suggested the man give Lee a ride back to her rooming house, a mile and a half away on Gower. "I still can't believe this myself, I was so naïve, but to me it seemed only a kind gesture," she remembered in her memoir. "Also, the fact that he was sitting with Mr. Potter seemed a sort of guarantee."

Instead of driving the singer home to her rooming house, though, the stranger took her to a "shabby-looking club" downtown. There she found herself sandwiched into a booth full of men, all of them drinking heavily—especially Potter's friend. One of the other men suddenly whispered in her ear that she was in danger and he was going to get her out of there. As they made to leave, Potter's friend confronted them. "There was a terrible fight, and fortunately for me, my new friend won. The next minute we were rushing out of the club and running for his car." The gallant rescuer—her other "greatest big brother"—informed her on the drive home that, "You, young lady, were headed for white slavery, and nobody would have heard from you again. Nobody."

Did Larry Potter try to sell Peggy Lee into a life of prostitution? Lee's memories are frequently fanciful and melodramatic, but, as Lee biographer James Gavin notes, "even Lee's most preposterously delusional stories held glints of emotional truth." By 1938 "white slavery" was a rather archaic euphemism, but instances of young girls—of all races—being kidnapped and forced into prostitution were still commonplace in Los Angeles. That same year, police broke up a prostitution ring headed by a woman, Ann Forrester. At her trial, Forrester, whom newspapers dubbed "The Black Widow," testified about the activities of "The Syndicate," a group of mobsters who controlled the city's lucrative gambling and prostitution operations. Given Potter's pimp past and his ties to known mobsters, Lee's story may have had more than a glimmer of truth. At the very least Potter must have known that his friend had more in mind than a ride home for the unworldly teen he described in a 1950 newspaper piece as "corn-fed, milk-cheeked and with hay practically falling out of her hair."

Lee herself does not appear to have connected all the dots. Back at the Jade afterwards, "Chuck Barclay was shocked to hear what had happened," she wrote, "and he and Bob the bartender, Paul the bar boy, Irene my guardian [a waitress], Chuck and Carol, Larry and Sue all doubled security." Presumably the "Carol" [sic] paired with Chuck was the enigmatic Marguerite Lundquist, Craig Smith's mother. If so, it is her only mention in Lee's memoir.

Eventually long hours, late nights and poor nutrition took a toll on Lee's health. In July she collapsed onstage in the middle of her set and was rushed in a squad car to Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital. A doctor there

diagnosed severe tonsillitis and recommended Lee return home to North Dakota for surgery and to be with her family. She didn't have enough money for a train ticket, so, as Chuck later remembered, the employees at the Jade rallied around to help her. "By this time we'd all grown to love her so much that all the waiters and waitresses and bartenders—everyone that worked there—chipped in to try to get Peggy home."

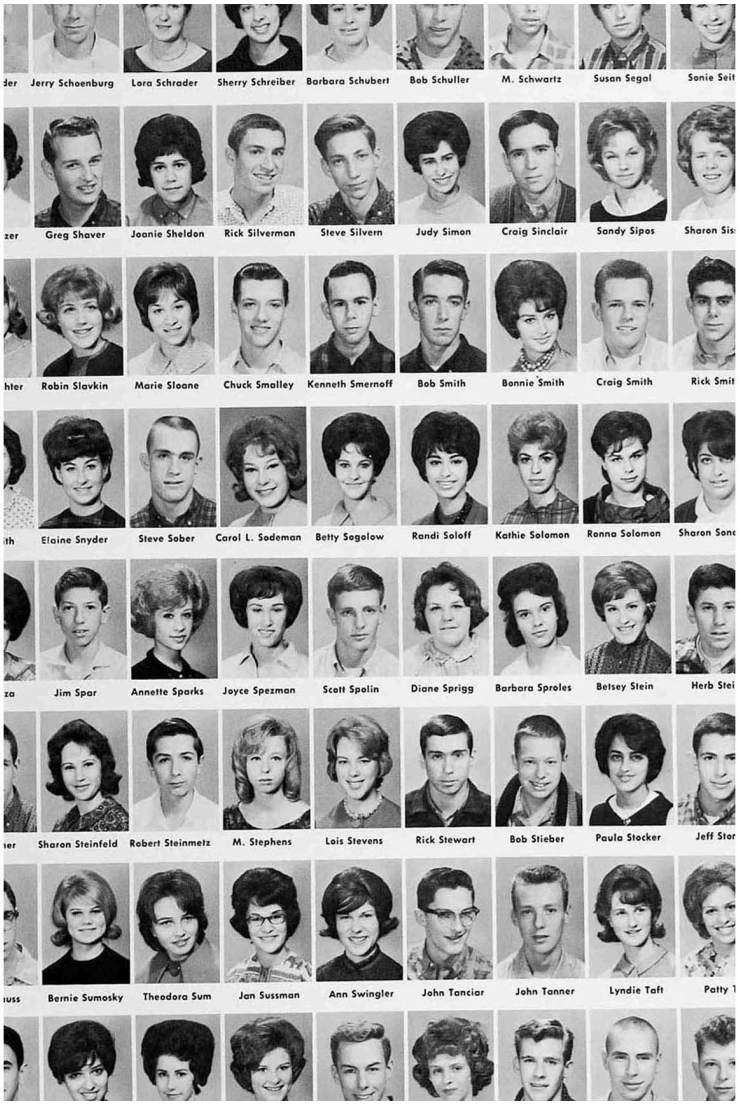
Chuck Barclay would continue to work at the Jade Room for several more years. He was still there in late 1940 or early 1941 when Peggy Lee came back for a short return engagement. Several months later she joined Benny Goodman's band and her career began its inexorable ascendancy. Little did Chuck and Carole know then that they would one day have a son who would not only share the stage with Peggy Lee, but also record for the label which released most of her biggest hits.

Craig Smith's father, Chuck, reunited with Peggy Lee in November 1972 on the television show *This Is Your Life*.

Lee never forgot the favor Chuck Barclay did her by hiring her at the Jade, nor the protection and friendship he gave her during the months she worked there. When she was honored on an episode of *This Is Your Life*, filmed at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas on November 28th, 1972, Chuck was flown in as one of the 'surprise' guests, putting him in the company of such luminaries as Duke Ellington, Leonard Feather, and Louis Armstrong's widow Lucille. As Craig's father walked out onstage, Lee was clearly delighted to see him: "Chuck!" she beamed as they embraced. While most of Chuck's dialogue had been scripted in advance, Lee's banter was genuinely spontaneous. "He took care of me," she says, as Chuck chortles nervously. "He did everything for me. He chaperoned me… You didn't know how old I was either!" she adds. "I didn't know!" admitted Chuck,

who also went off script to joke with her about “that little Volu-Tone microphone,” referring to the inexpensive ribbon microphone they used at the club. No mention was made of Larry Potter, who had died ten months earlier at the age of 77, but according to the script notes Chuck told Peggy, “Steve Boardner and a lot of the guys from the old days asked me to say hello.”

For Chuck Barclay—“now working at the Pump Room in Studio City,” according to announcer Ralph Edwards—these brief moments onstage at Caesar’s Palace must have been a poignant reminder of simpler and presumably happier times.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Lora Schrader
Sherry Schreiber
Barbara Schubert
Bob Schuller
M. Schwartz
Susan Segal
Greg Shaver
Joanie Sheldon
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Judy Simon
Craig Sinclair
Sandy Sipos
Robin Slavkin
Marie Sloane
Chuck Smalley
Kenneth Smernoff
Bob Smith
Bonnie Smith
Craig Smith
Elaine Snyder
Steve Saber
Carol L. Sademan
Betty Sagalow
Randi Soloff
Kathie Solomon
Ronna Solomon
Jim Spar
Annette Sparks
Joyce Spezman
Scott Spolin
Diane Sprigg
Barbara Sproles
Betsey Stein
Sharon Steinfeld
Robert Steinmetz
M. Stephens
Lois Stevens
Rick Stewart
Bob Stieber
Paula Stocker
Bernie Sumosky
Theodora Sum
Jan Sussman
Ann Swingler
John Tanciar
John Tanner
Lyndie Taft

Craig Smith, 14, in the summer of 1959, and (background) in the Grant High School yearbook, 1962.

2

STUDIO CITY

Chuck and Carole's first son, Charles Henry Smith, was born on March 31st, 1940, by which time they'd moved three blocks east of the Parva-Sed Apta Apartments to a small house at 2034 Vista Del Mar Avenue. Perhaps Carole's singing career had ended now that they had started a family; Charles' birth certificate shows her as a "Housewife." Chuck was still working at the Jade Café; his occupation there listed as "Assistant Manager." The 1940 census reveals that he'd worked 42 hours the week before his first son was born. According to the census, Chuck and Carole had not yet married, although the birth certificate shows her as "Mrs. Charles Smith."

Chuck was still working at the Jade two years later when a second son, Gary Conrad Smith, was born on March 14th, 1942. In the May 2nd issue of *Billboard* magazine Chuck was billed as the "producer" of a show at the Jade's Dragon Room. "There is nothing extravagant about the shows," wrote reviewer Sam Abbott, "as the club lacks facilities for presentation, but they are packed with talent and [the] current 30-minute show is no exception. Opens with Chuck Barclay emseeing and bringing on Darlene Garner, a blond good-looker who tries vocals to fair results and then socks with rhythm tap. She's got plenty, including talent."

Business at the Jade was booming during the war years. According to a newswire story in June 1942, "With the shortage of night clubs effecting the social life of the aircraft workers and service men, Larry Potter has enlarged his Jade Café to include five bars and two nonstop floor shows." The boom ended abruptly that same month when naval authorities added the Jade to a growing list of establishments that were out of bounds to servicemen, citing

violation of Section 62 of their guidelines: “selling to obviously intoxicated military personnel.” On July 15th Potter wrote a letter of protest to the Commandant of the 11th Naval District in San Diego, expressing his surprise at the ruling and offering to appear before the authorities to plead his case. “The Jade has always been very strict in regard to serving people of questionable character, is very proud of the type of it’s [sic] employees, and the cleanliness of it’s [sic] floor shows,” he wrote. Whether his letter had any effect on the decision is not known, but the Jade’s heyday was over. In October 1943 it was announced in *Billboard* that Potter had sold the club to Arthur Lyons along with another of his Hollywood Boulevard nightspots, the Stardust Café.

The sale of the Jade may have meant that Chuck Barclay was out of a job. It seems to have prompted a temporary change of career. When Craig Smith was born on April 25th, 1945, 31-year-old Charles Gabriel Smith is listed as a “welder” at the “Chastnec Mnfg. Co.” Had Chuck given up bar management and floorshow production and picked up a blowtorch? Apparently so. Interestingly, Larry Potter had once worked in the welding trade in San Francisco and Salt Lake City almost 30 years earlier. (As had his father: In San Francisco in July 1916 Newton Potter was questioned by police investigating a domestic terrorism bombing that left ten dead and 40 wounded. Prior to the bombing, Potter’s father had met with the two isolationist terrorists who carried out the attack and, apparently in all innocence, manufactured the casing of a prototype pipe bomb for them.) It’s tempting to speculate that Chastnec was a front for one of Potter’s operations, but more likely Chuck was just trying to find work wherever he could. When Craig’s sister Deborah was born, on July 15th, 1950, Chuck was listed as a self-employed construction salesman.

By the mid-1950s, the Smith family had moved out of Hollywood and into the San Fernando Valley, settling in a modest section of the well-heeled neighborhood of Studio City. The Smith family home, a typical one-story California ranch house, was located at 13019 Woodbridge, a quiet, leafy, suburban street that intersects with Coldwater Canyon Road, just a couple of blocks north of the city’s main artery, Ventura Boulevard. Perhaps Chuck was working for Larry Potter again. His popular “burlesk” hangout, Larry Potter’s Supper Club, was a few miles down the road at 11345 Ventura. The

Pump Room, where Chuck was working in the early 1970s, was just two blocks from the Smith house.

As its name suggests, Studio City was born out of the entertainment industry. Originally known as Laurelwood, the city was renamed for the 20-acre studio lot Mack Sennett opened in 1928 at the corner of Radford Avenue and Ventura Boulevard. The studio was taken over by Republic Pictures in the mid-1930s, and became the shooting site for numerous B movies during the ’30s and ’40s, including popular westerns starring Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, and John Wayne. Roy Rogers and his wife Dale Evans reportedly lived just around the corner from the Smiths on Valleyheart Drive. By the 1950s the lot was being used to film many early television shows, including the first season of *Leave it to Beaver*. In the early ’60s CBS took over the lot and began filming many of their network TV shows there, including *Gunsmoke, Gilligan’s Island*, and *My Three Sons*. So Craig Smith was raised in the same neighborhood as Beaver Cleaver, not far from the lagoon on Gilligan’s Island, and across town from what would later become the Brady Bunch house.

Many of the residents of Studio City work in the entertainment industry. Craig grew up with the children of actors, musicians, writers, publicists, and cameramen, many of those kids to become successful entertainers in their own right. The fast-moving currents of the industry continued to flow all around him.

In the early 1950s Craig attended Dixie Canyon Avenue Elementary School, right off Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks. “He was one of my brother Jeff’s playmates,” remembers Ken Morgan. “I used to tag along because I was the youngest brother. I’d go over and see my friend Harry Davenport, who lived across the street from Craig, a few houses over. Then we’d go over to Craig’s house and my brother would be over there. Craig’s parents were nice people. I think they might have been in the industry. Seems like 95 percent of the kids I knew had parents who worked in the industry. Harry was the grandson of the famous stage and movie actor Harry Davenport, who was in *Gone With the Wind* and *The Enchanted Forest*. His father was a cameraman. My dad was a Hollywood publicist and my mom was an actress. My uncle was a publicist and was also Lucille Ball’s brother-in-law, so Lucy was our aunt by marriage.”

Another Dixie Canyon student, Judy Frisk, remembers Craig having some behavioral problems during this period. “In grammar school, he was one of two boys who the teachers identified as out-of-control problem kids,” she recalls. “It might have been his home life, although I don’t know anything about this. Craig and a John Coulter were both thought of as ‘bad boys.’ There were two classrooms for each grade level, so the teachers used to make sure they were never in the same class. They also tried switching them around, trying them out with different classrooms in an attempt to break the behavior patterns. Weird because Craig made this huge turnaround by high school.”

After Dixie Canyon, Craig went to Van Nuys Junior High where his fellow students included Micky Dolenz, Tom Selleck, Rick Cunha (later of the group Hearts & Flowers), Ruthann Friedman (who wrote “Windy” for the Association), composer Mike Post, and record producer and future Lieutenant Governor of California Mike Curb. Dolenz already had a starring role on the TV show *Circus Boy*, under the stage name Mickey Braddock. After junior high, Smith, along with all of these budding musicians and future celebs, moved on to Ulysses S. Grant High School.

Interestingly, another of Craig’s junior high and high school classmates was future session drummer Jim Gordon, whose life was also tragically derailed by schizophrenia. “Jim Gordon learned drums in the same program where I learned to play violin,” remembers Judy. “He was quiet but friendly, very nice and really well-liked. In high school he was hired to tour with the Everly Brothers and jumped at the opportunity. He went on to become one of the busiest studio drummers in the business from the late ’60s through the early ’70s. The problem was, he was an undiagnosed schizophrenic, and as the disease emerged in early adulthood he handled it by self-medicating with lots of drugs and alcohol. But by 1983 he was hearing voices, mostly his mother’s. In order to stop them, one night he went to her house and stabbed and clubbed her to death. He then went down to a bar, got drunk and told people what he had just done. Someone immediately called the police and he was picked up within minutes. He’s been in Atascadero [maximum-security state hospital] every since. He is of course medicated now, but his is one of the most tragic stories I know. Both he and Craig were quite popular and held student body offices, yell leader, etc., in junior high and high school. It’s really interesting they each had the

capacity to reach quite high, but each succumbed in time. Jim's case is well documented; unfortunately that isn't the case for Craig."

By the time Craig began attending Grant High School in the fall of 1960, he was getting good grades. He became class president in his senior year, and was also on the school's gymnastics team, excelling on the rings and competing in state competitions in his senior year. "I remember him," says Ruthann Friedman. "Popular, handsome. Not my crowd, [which was] beatnik; seriously serious."

Doug Brookins was on the gymnastics team with Craig. "Craig and I competed in gymnastics together until I graduated in '62," remembers Brookins. "It was Valley competitions, and citywide competitions. I don't know if Craig ever placed in the Valley finals or the city finals. He may have 'cause he was a year behind me and a year makes a big difference in the life of a student and athletic competitor."

Brookins was also a singer and a musician, following in the footsteps of his father, Don, who had been a member of the Avalon Boys, a vocal quartet that appeared in numerous movies in the 1930s, including *Way Out West* with Laurel & Hardy. At school Doug formed a folk group with Mike Curb and guitarist Davie Putnam, later better known as fuzz guitar maestro Davie Allan. Jim Gordon also drummed for them on occasion. "Believe it or not, we called ourselves the Lettermen because we were both lettermen in our respective sports," recalls Brookins. "Michael was proficient in tennis and he competed on a very high level as well, and I in gymnastics, and when we went and did our performances we'd wear our lettermen sweaters from Grant High and go and play. So we used that name even though there was a very successful group on Capitol Records called the Lettermen as well. We just sort of absconded their name for our little high school performances." Brookins, Curb and Putnam also sang in the school choir together. But not Craig. "I didn't know that he had any interest in music at all," says Brookins. "To be honest with you, I had not a clue."

Brookins graduated from Grant in 1962, a year before Craig, but their paths would cross again down the road.

Craig's interest in music apparently began to blossom during his senior year, by which time he had befriended Heather MacRae, the daughter of singer and movie actor Gordon MacRae (the star of *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*) and Sheila MacRae (also a successful actress and singer). "He

was like the typical, wonderful All-American boy," remembers Heather. "Just the greatest smile and very popular." The MacRae family lived in a more upscale neighborhood of Studio City on the way over the hills to Hollywood. Craig would often go up to their house on Oakdell Street to spend time with Heather and her family. Music was always being played around the house, and he and Heather would sing together or listen to records. "I remember Craig playing the guitar and a bunch of us singing and just having a lot of fun," says Heather. "We'd sing pop songs mostly." Their circle of friends included Pam and Patti Price, the daughters of Loulie Jean Norman Price, who was one of the Henry Mancini Singers. She later sang the distinctive soprano vocal on the *Star Trek* theme. Pam Price would go on to marry Richie Hayward, the drummer of the Factory and Little Feat, while Patti would marry another friend of Heather's, Chuck Shyer, who would become a well-known movie director and producer.

Suzanne Belcher, who later married Mike Love of the Beach Boys, was another good friend at the time. "Craig and I used to ride the bus to Grant High School together," she remembers. "We were good friends for a long time. He was class president, and we just kind of hung out together. We had other friends that hung out in the same group. He lived close by so he'd come over. I don't remember ever going to his house. He was really friendly. He had a great smile, and was good-looking and amiable."

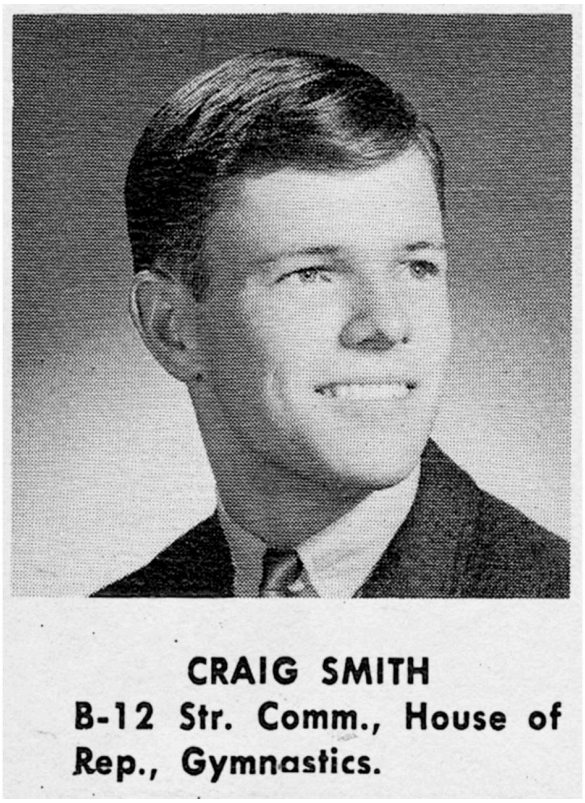
When Craig graduated from Grant High in June 1963 he had scholarship offers for several different colleges, but the academic path didn't appeal to him. He'd already been swept up in the entertainment industry current.

As had Doug Brookins. After graduating from high school, Brookins had enrolled at Los Angeles Valley College, but also continued to play folk music, first with his own group, the Wellinbrook Singers, and then as a member of the New Christy Minstrels. When they hired Brookins in March 1963, the ten-piece folk ensemble was already a hugely successful national act with two albums on Columbia Records and a residency on NBC-TV's *The Andy Williams Show*. Several months after joining the Christys, Brookins ran into Smith unexpectedly on the hillside above the Hollywood Bowl. "I had just turned 19 years old," remembers Doug. "We were booked at the Hollywood Bowl. I didn't have a car, my folks were driving me to the concert and the traffic was so bad. I said, 'Look, I'm late, I've gotta get

out.' So I got out of the car, they had tickets to the show, and I said, 'I'll see you after the show.' So I went running up the mountains to get into the back of the Hollywood Bowl, and there I saw Craig again for the first time since graduating from Grant High. He hadn't paid to get tickets but you could watch the show outside of the theater proper up on the hillside above the Hollywood Bowl. I was carrying my guitar, I guess that's what got his attention, and he called out my name and we renewed our friendship.

Craig (center), high school class president, 1962.

"He said that he had been hooting at the Troubadour and that he had joined a group called the Good Time Singers who were presently being considered to replace the New Christy Minstrels on *The Andy Williams Show*. I said, 'Craig, that's wonderful news. I didn't know that you were interested in music!' He said, 'Oh yeah, my mom was a singer back in the day. She was friends with Peggy Lee.' So apparently he had a little family music background. I said, 'Craig, that's wonderful news. Congratulations! I wish you much success.' And so we left it at that. The Christys did our show, and I went home. It was an odd destiny that we would come together again in August of the same year and I would be hired by the same group, the Goodtimers, of which he was an original member."



CRAIG SMITH
B-12 Str. Comm., House of Rep., Gymnastics.

Senior yearbook photo, 1963.

3

HOOTS

The folk music boom that took root in America in the late 1950s reached its peak in 1963, the year Craig Smith graduated from Grant High School. Spurred by the commercial success of folk acts like the Kingston Trio, Peter, Paul & Mary, Joan Baez, the New Christy Minstrels, and the Rooftop Singers—who topped the national pop charts early that year with "Walk Right In"—thousands of American youngsters reached for acoustic guitars or banjos and added their voices to the growing throng in coffeehouses, bars, nightclubs, and college campus parties across the land. Folk music was a grass roots movement that actively encouraged participation. Hootenanny, loosely defined as a gathering of folk musicians, was the buzzword of the day—"the whole country is having one" buzzed *Time* magazine in November 1962—finding currency on radio and television and in countless newspaper and magazine articles.

By the summer of 1963, Craig Smith was venturing into the burgeoning folk music scene in Los Angeles, which was centered in clubs like the Ash Grove, the Ice House in Pasadena, and the Troubadour in West Hollywood. He began participating in the Troubadour's popular Monday Night Hoots, where novice folk musicians were encouraged to get up onstage and showcase their talents. It was there that Craig attracted the interest of Tom Drake and Michael Storm, who were in the process of forming a new, ten-piece folk ensemble to appear as regulars on television's *Andy Williams Show*. It was a meeting that would change the course of Smith's life.

When they first met Craig Smith, Drake and Storm were already seasoned folk musicians, having played together for several years as the Other Singers. Drake, 27, was the older and more experienced of the two.

Born in Vancouver, B.C., in 1936, as a child he'd been a successful CBC radio actor. Drake and his family relocated to Los Angeles when he was 12 and he developed his talent singing in a professional boys' choir, at one point performing as a soloist at the Hollywood Bowl. Drake began making inroads into the folk music scene in the late '50s when he started writing songs with Bob Shane of the Kingston Trio, a creative partnership that would continue for several years. In 1960 he accepted a job offer to be an English teacher at Helix High School in La Mesa, so Tom, his wife Sally, and infant son Steven relocated to the San Diego area. Two more children followed in short order. Drake taught English and coached swimming by day, and spent most of his weekends and many evenings playing folk music in bars and coffeehouses around town. There were several different configurations of the Other Singers before Drake met Michael Storm sometime in 1961.

Twenty-one years old at the time, Storm was still eight years away from landing the role that would end up more or less defining his career, that of Dr. Larry Wolek on the daytime television soap opera *One Life to Live*, a part he would play from 1969 through 1992 (and as a recurring role for 12 years after that). With his chiseled features, strong jawline and full hair, he looked like an archetypal Hollywood leading man, and with his family's background in show business, Storm's career as a successful actor seemed almost preordained. "My grandfather was a silent film actor and a legitimate stage actor," he told me, "although he died long before I was born. My grandmother, his wife, was a Floradora Girl. The Floradora dancers were a group of traveling women dancers who danced all around the country. Her daughter, my mother, Margaret, was a child film actor, so acting came into my life genetically. My father, John Storm, was a screenwriter and a book writer, and an actor and a director. But the last thing I ever imagined doing was something in show business because I heard nothing but a lot of failure stories. My father kept saying, 'Do whatever you want to do, just don't be an actor.' And, what happened? Up popped a devil and I became an actor. I loved it, but I found out subsequently exactly what he was talking about. It's a horrible business. It's guaranteed to break your heart. Guaran*teed*," he repeats emphatically, "to break your heart!"

Although Michael is perhaps the most ‘famous’ and successful person I interview about Craig Smith, he’s also one of the most generous with his time. When our first scheduled interview in Los Angeles falls through, he and his wife instead come to meet me at my home in La Mesa—coincidentally, just a stone’s throw from Helix High School where Tom Drake taught English. Like Tom, Michael married a lady named Sally, and as we talk she chimes in to clarify or elaborate on various details of the story.

In the early ’60s Michael was living in La Jolla with his mother and older brother Jim. While Jim pursued a career in acting, Michael worked by day at the Del Mar racetrack, and spent his evenings in the local bars and coffeehouses playing folk music. Folk music’s attraction was its simplicity. “It was just something I could do,” he shrugs. “I could sing, and with three chords you could do it. And you met girls, and people would buy you beer.”

In the small circle of San Diego-area folkies, it was inevitable that Storm would eventually cross paths with Tom Drake. “I met Tom because I was working with a guy, Dick Noren, at the Del Mar racetrack. We would work at the racetrack, and then we’d go out, and I would play guitar and he would sing, and we’d usually get drunk and sing and get more drunk, and then finally go home. Anyway, Dick said he knew a guy named Tom Drake who had a trio and one of his trio was leaving to go back into the Air Force, and would I be interested in replacing him? And so I met up with Tom and I auditioned—and that meant I knew which side of the guitar to play,” he laughs, “and Tom said, ‘You’re on. We’ll meet on Friday at the Pour House.’ So we started to perform at the Pour House in La Jolla, which was a tiny little beer house with a stage. Again, there were girls every night and free beer, and 25 dollars a night, which was enough money to live on back then.”

The Other Singers, Michael Storm (guitar) and Tom Drake (banjo), entertaining teenagers at a La Jolla, California shopping mall in December 1962

The third member of the trio was Richard Conte, who banged on a conga drum. “That, ironically, was a very valuable instrument to have,” notes Storm. “He could keep time—because Tom and I were awful at keeping time! But it didn’t matter. Mainly the people in the audience wanted to sing. We would do an old song called ‘Hey lally lally lo’ where you’d make up these endless couplets, and we could sing a 40-minute set just singing ‘Hey lally’ because the audience loved it. They’d throw in a name and we’d sing that, and we’d get away with it. We’d go have a beer; we’d wait for the next set, and do the same thing. So it was Tom, Richard Conte and me. Little by little we started getting really good. We were actually a pretty good trio.”

Storm and Drake formed a tight friendship that would last until Tom's death on August 8th, 2008. "Tom was great," says Michael. "He was about four years older than I. He was an English teacher, he was very intellectual, and had a bawdy, wonderful sense of humor. I have a similar sense of humor and we would use that in our act. We just had great, great fun. He was a lot more mature, and he could do all the business stuff; that was his thing, he loved that—and thank God because I had no acumen for the creation of a workable business model, and Tom just fell into it. We were tremendously close—really brothers. Onstage I could tell what he was going to do next—and he what I was going to do next. We really supported each other in a wonderful way. Tom, being a teacher, loved to talk, and I love to talk too, so a lot of our singing was talking. It's hard to sing for 40 minutes in a row, and so you create some shtick. So we would do that. We'd try to bust each other up. We were closer than brothers."

By 1962, the Other Singers had expanded their playing radius to Los Angeles. Storm was attending UCLA, majoring in Fine Arts, and commuting back and forth between La Jolla and Los Angeles—a two-hour drive. Drake was now making almost as much money playing music as he was at his teaching job, which, according to his wife Sally, he hated. One day, out of the blue, a check arrived in the mail for back royalties on songs Tom had written for the Kingston Trio. "A check for $4,728 landed on our doorstep," remembers Sally Drake. "It was Tom's favorite number. That was a very big amount of money for us at that point. He was making $275 a month teaching high school. It was bare bones." Sally had just given birth to their third son, and they decided it was time to leave La Mesa behind and head back up to Los Angeles.

Drake took a teaching job at Palisades High School, and the Other Singers increased their presence on the L.A. live circuit, and even broke into television, appearing on an episode of CBS' *The Lloyd Bridges Show*. "It was our first TV job, which in and of itself was momentous—at least to Tom and me," says Storm. "I think the appearance would have been called a 'cameo' but for us, back then, it was a real showbiz event!" In 1963 the Other Singers appeared on a live album released by Dave Hubert's Horizon label, *Hootenanny at the Troubadour*, alongside Hoyt Axton, Judy Henske and others, and shortly afterwards recorded their own album for the label, *The Other Singers Sing Other Songs for Other People*. Although they

played all over Los Angeles and San Diego counties, it was at the Troubadour that they spent most of their time. “The Troubadour was the most important single location of the era,” states Storm. “Everybody hung out at the Troubadour, and if you performed there you had free entry. It was where we all congregated. You broke new material in there. It was just family.”

It was at one of the Troubadour’s Monday Night Hoots in August of 1963 that Drake and Storm first got word that *The Andy Williams Show* was looking for a ten-piece folk ensemble to appear as cast members. The New Christy Minstrels, led by Randy Sparks, had filled that role during the 1962–63 season, but having since released a million-selling hit single —“Green Green,” sung by the group’s Barry McGuire—they were now demanding too much money. The Williams show was scheduled to begin rehearsals in two weeks and the producers were in urgent need of a similar blend of wholesome young folkies to take their place.

David Jackson, who would become the Good Time Singers’ bass player, remembers how it went down. “It was a Monday when *The Andy Williams Show* called Randy Sparks, and it would have been about two weeks before the first show went to rehearsal,” he recalls. “Randy told me this story. They said, ‘OK, we’re going to do the second season of *The Andy Williams Show*, we’ll see you here in two weeks.’ Randy said, ‘Great, at twice the money.’ They said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘Then goodbye.’

“He hung up the phone and then Don Williams, Andy’s brother, called the Troubadour and said, ‘We need a nine- or ten-piece folk group by next Monday!’ Doug Weston, the owner of the Troubadour, went around the Hootenanny that night and asked if I could make a rehearsal tomorrow, Tuesday, and I said yes. He did that to a number of people. Tom and Mike were a duo already so he put them in charge.”

Sally Drake remembers it only slightly differently. “On one Monday in late August 1963 Andy Williams’ manager, Alan Bernard, was in the audience scouting for a replacement for the New Christy Minstrels. He caught Tom and Michael’s set and contacted Tom the following morning and asked him if he was interested in forming a group of ten singers to audition for Andy’s show. He said there was a serious time restraint, because the first show of the season was scheduled to tape in two weeks.”

Drake and Storm quickly went to work assembling their team. Nineteen-year-old Dave Jackson was an obvious first choice. He was an excellent stand-up bass player and background singer who'd already accompanied the Other Singers on several occasions, as well as playing with more established artists like Bob Gibson, Josh White, and Joe & Eddie. Next to be signed up was Margaret Beasley, a young singer who had been a student of Drake's at Helix High, and had babysat his children. "I heard her singing to the kids one night before we went out, and thought to myself, 'She has a good voice,'" Drake told the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*. "So, when the opportunity came along to form a group, I called her in. Funny how things work out sometimes." For the Good Time Singers Beasley adopted the folksier stage name of Maggie Patton.

Drake and Storm selected two more female singers, one of whom was Alexandra Brown, a young black woman with a background in gospel music. A mixed-race group was not a common sight in 1963, especially on mainstream television, so this was a bold decision. It would have repercussions down the line. According to Jackson: "We had the first rehearsal Tuesday, they found her on Wednesday. We thought it would be a good idea since Josh White was playing at the Troubadour that week and the inclusion of a black person in 1963 was a pretty darn big deal."

The Good Time Singers, 1963. Back row (left to right): Dave Jackson, Doug Brookins, Michael Storm, Craig Smith, Bob Flesher. Front row: Tom Drake, Alexandra Brown, Maggie Patton, Marilyn Miller, Lee Montgomery.

More young faces filled out the cast, including Lee Montgomery, a big gruff teddy bear of a guy with a voice somewhere between Hoyt Axton and Barry McGuire. “I was a folk singer in the L.A. area at the time,” says Montgomery. “Doug Weston, the guy that owned the Troubadour, was kind of my manager.”

Young and outgoing with a dazzling smile, Craig Smith was selected as much for his personality as his musical ability. Although he had a pleasant singing voice, he was still only a novice guitar player, but Craig won Drake and Storm over right away. “Craig was terrific,” says Michael. “Craig was charming, fun. He played with a twinkle in his eye. He was just having fun.

And he could be silly—you could laugh your head off with him. He was just a fun guy."

Craig didn't make as much of an impression on Tom Drake's wife Sally. "To me he was just a cute young guy who could sing," she says. "He was not particularly hip. He did not smoke pot. He was just a clean-cut young *blah* kid."

The ten-piece group rehearsed three songs together, and auditioned for Andy Williams and his producers on the Thursday. A few days later they got word that they'd passed the audition. Contracts were signed, and days later they were at NBC's new studios in Burbank rehearsing for their first TV appearance. The entire process had taken a little over a week.

They needed a name, and picked one based on their collective personalities. "The name the Good Time Singers was chosen in a laugh-filled round-robin at a late-night session at the local Denny's restaurant," remembers Sally Drake. "As I recall, it was Doug Weston who said, 'How about the Good Time Singers?' Everyone cheered and the group was born."

Weston, who had been instrumental in forming the group and getting them signed, had expectations of becoming their manager, but, according to Sally, Williams' manager nipped that idea in the bud early on. "Alan Bernard told Tom, 'I want this guy out of your situation. We will not work with him.' Doug thought that he would be managing them and Tom had to tell him, 'Sorry, they don't want you.' Doug was very nice about it, and he didn't hold a grudge."

With Weston out of the picture Bernard stepped in as their manager. It was a shrewd power play because it enabled him to contain the group's success and keep them bound to the show. "Tom was the worst businessman in the world," insists Sally Drake, "and it started with the Good Time Singers. He got so screwed over by Alan Bernard, who insisted he was managing them. He didn't want what happened to the New Christy Minstrels to happen to the Good Time Singers. He really didn't. And Tom didn't stand up to him."

"Don Williams and Alan Bernard were the production company," explains David Jackson. "Don being Andy's brother. And so they *bought* us as an act *and* they managed us—so therefore they also *sold* us, which is now illegal, but that's what happened then. So we didn't make a lot of money, just took our union scale—three hundred and something dollars a

week, I think. That was pretty OK dough, but in retrospect they really should have signed us as an AFTRA act. We should have been principal actors, which would've been about three times the money—which is why they didn't do that, because they had to sell us and buy us back at the same time, so they'd buy us back at the cheapest price."

According to Michael Storm, during the first season the singers were each paid around $250–$300 per week and received a pay increase each year thereafter. Adjusted for inflation, that's a weekly paycheck of around $2,000 in today's money. For an 18-year-old kid like Craig Smith, right out of high school and still living with his parents, that must have seemed like a small fortune.

Cameraman adjusts for lighting on Good Time Singers in rehearsal, one of thousands of technical details.

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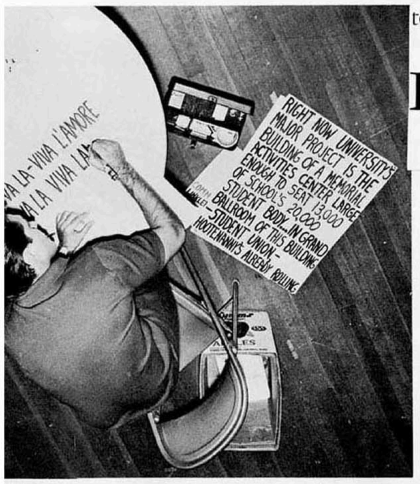
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Shooting the *Hootenanny* television special for ABC in late 1963.

4

ALL-AMERICAN GOOD TIME SINGER

Whether by luck, looks or talent, Craig Smith had been catapulted from Hoot Night to Prime Time. The Good Time Singers made their debut appearance on *The Andy Williams Show* on September 24th, 1963, joining Andy to sing "Bury Me Beneath the Willow Tree." Immediately after the first show, though, the group underwent a lineup shakeup. Two of the men and one woman departed, and Drake and the producers scrambled to find three replacements in time for the next show.

The timing couldn't have been better for Craig's high school buddy Doug Brookins, who'd just been replaced in the New Christy Minstrels by future Byrds member Gene Clark. Brookins got wind of the auditions from Mike Post and headed down to NBC's old studios at Sunset and Vine to try out. "There were like five hundred people there," he remembers, "everybody auditioning for three spots in the Good Time Singers." Brookins played two songs for them, and later that afternoon got a call from Drake telling him he had the job and to report to rehearsals in Burbank on the following Monday.

Marilyn Miller, an attractive blonde with a three-octave range, was also hired, as was banjo player Bob Flesher. "I was sitting at a drafting desk on a Monday where I worked as a draftsman at Canon Electric," remembers Flesher. "When I got off work and went home I got a call from Tom Drake stating he was with the Good Time Singers who had replaced the New Christy Minstrels on *The Andy Williams Show*. He said their banjo player had quit after one show and wanted to know if I would be interested in auditioning the next morning at NBC Studios in Burbank at 8 a.m. For some reason I said yes. I lived in Orange County and it was over an hour

drive. Well, I auditioned for them and they said yes. At 10:00, less than 24 hours after I was sitting at a drafting desk, I was sitting next to Andy Williams practicing a banjo song called 'Thumb Pick Pete,' which I had never heard in my life and didn't particularly lend itself to a five-string banjo. At the taping of the show on Sunday night the director told me, 'Don't make any mistakes because this tape costs $1,500 a minute if we have to do it over.' That calmed my nerves!"

Although ostensibly a "folk group," on TV the Good Time Singers were part of an all-purpose variety show cast, participating in skits and song and dance numbers with Andy and assorted guests, which in their first season alone included Art Carney, Don Knotts, Dick Van Dyke, Bob Newhart and Joey Bishop. "I learned that the group had four purposes," explains Flesher. "First, to perform a solo each week. Second, to be the background singers for the stars. Third, to be the extras in the skits, and fourth, when they wanted quiet on the set the director would yell at *us*, not the stars, and they would get the message."

Smith's outgoing personality and natural charisma translated well to television, and the Williams' show producers began favoring him with a little more camera time. "I remember him as a very handsome young man with a lot of energy and a million-dollar smile," says Flesher. "When you saw a picture of the whole group you would always be drawn to his face. Craig was certainly the dominant character of the group in many of the sketches we did."

On the December 10th episode the Good Time Singers performed "Mountain Greenery" with Williams. Craig bounds onto the set ahead of the rest of the cast to begin the piece, and has some dialogue with Andy later in the song. It's white-bread family entertainment in its purest and most anodyne form, airing to a nation still stunned by the assassination of their president just two-and-a-half weeks earlier.

The group was in their second week of a four-week engagement at the Troubadour on Friday, November 22nd when Kennedy was shot. The club went dark that night, but reopened on the Saturday, as did most of the venues around town. "I went to see Tom there on the 23rd and it was crammed full and everybody in the club was manic as hell," remembers Sally Drake. "It was just crazed, and that was just expressing grief really."

Performing on a television variety show was quite arduous work. Rehearsals and costume fittings ran through most of the week, becoming more intense as the day of the taping approached. “Ninety-five percent of what we sang was behind the lead singer, either Andy or the guest,” explains Michael Storm. “They would rehearse and we would rehearse with them, and we’d rehearse until we’d got it.”

The show was filmed live with a studio audience, but a full dress rehearsal was also taped as a backup, in case anything went wrong with the live feed. “On the day of the show there was a full dress run-through with tape,” explains Jackson. “Then we’d break for dinner, and then come back and shoot the show. They would run the previously recorded dress rehearsal in sync with the show, pretty much, including commercial time. We wouldn’t see any commercials, obviously, but they would put those in either at NBC or in New York or whatever, but we would be down for however long the commercials would take, and then ‘5-4-3-2-1’ and we’d be up again. I think it was a seven-second delay. So if something messed up on the live show, they had seven seconds to pull in something from the dress rehearsal and fix it—which I only saw happen once. I was told that was pretty darn modern stuff in 1963. Not many people could do that. It took that big studio at NBC to pull that off.”

For over two years Craig and the other Good Time Singers worked alongside some of the biggest names in show business. Interacting with celebrities would become second nature to Craig, and his ease and confidence around famous people would serve him well in the years ahead.

One of the first stars he worked with on the show was none other than Peggy Lee, who was Williams’ guest on November 12th. Brookins remembers an excited Smith gamboling over to Lee and asking if she remembered his mother. “She said, ‘Oh yes! She was a wonderful singer!’” he recalls. Craig’s parents must have been proud to see their son performing on television with Lee not once but twice. She was back on the show the following season, in February 1965, and there was some palpable electricity on the set between her and Craig as she played the character of an old-time saloon madam with Smith eyeing her up and down perhaps a little more appreciatively than the script notes called for.

Singing cowboy Roy Rogers was also on the show several times with his wife Dale Evans. Craig may have already known Roy and Dale from the

neighborhood. “Craig *loved* Roy Rogers!” remembers Storm. “We all did. We all had been raised on his movies. Roy would sit with us, and he one day expounded for an hour on how to make coffee,” he laughs. “He told us about ‘the cowboy way’ to make coffee. And his wife, we called her Chicken Little, she was just this little pudgy thing: ‘Oh Roy, don’t you bother those young people!’ ‘Oh, it’s all right! You take the coffee; you put an egg in the bottom of the pot...’ He was just wonderful. He couldn’t wait to see us every morning. A great guy. As I recall, Craig was smitten by him —but we all were.”

The Good Time Singers making their debut on *The Andy Williams Show* on September 4, 1963. Craig in foreground.

“Roy Rogers was a great guy!” agrees Doug Brookins. “I didn’t care for his wife—I called her Baby Huey—but loved Roy Rogers, because he just wanted to come out and play. Off the set we’d be having lunch and he’d come out, play Frisbee or throw a baseball back and forth. He was great.”

David Jackson remembers another side to the old cowboy. “Roy Rogers came on to every female dancer on the show—a number of times, kind of shamelessly, and kind of obviously—which Dale must have lived with for a portion of her life, I’m guessing. No one mentioned anything, but all the dancers told me, ‘Oh, that’s the fourth time he’s come on to me.’ That was interesting.”

"Don Knotts was the guest that week along with Roy and Dale," remembers Flesher. "There was a skit in which Andy, Roy and Dale made a campfire. Shortly after, Don Knotts shows up in his Barney Fife sheriff's outfit. He is instantly in control and wants to see their fire permit. They give him the fire permit and he moves over just in front of me to inspect it. I don't know what prompted me to do it, but I looked over his shoulder to see what it said. He immediately perceived a joke here and quickly turned and stared at me with a very serious face. It scared the hell out of me and I looked shocked. I just knew my short career was over. I was going to be fired there on the spot. But the director liked it and told me to continue to do that. Whew! Close call! As a result the director started giving me more parts like Craig had."

Because of his thick glasses and diminutive stature, the writers and director also favored Dave Jackson with some comedy bits with Williams and his guests. "I ended up kind of being the comic foil," relates Jackson. "I remember one of the first shows being with Milton Berle as the guest star. On the run-through in costume—we were Mounties—he came over and planted his open right hand on my mouth and then kissed his hand so it looked like a big stage kiss. The producers thought that was quite funny and the look on my face apparently was nice so they said, 'Let's keep that in for the show,' which was filmed after dinner that same day. Berle didn't like it that I got a laugh—I was told later—so on the show, he planted the kiss and then snapped the little elastic thing that came down under my chin to hold the hat on. He snapped that, and it stung like a son of a gun! And so my face went red. I still got a laugh, and so did he, but he'd showed me who was top there. That's one of the strongest recollections I have of the whole three years on the show."

"David was funny," remembers Brookins. "He was a comedian, he had a funny look. He didn't even have to say anything. You just looked at him and you laughed.

"And Craig had the look," he continues. "He was truly a good-looking fellow. Star quality, leading-man looks, at the time—and he knew it. They gave him a couple of showcases on the Williams show where he had a few lines to say. He did a good job. But for the rest of us—I mean, what were the Good Time Singers after all? We had a name for a while—but only because of *The Andy Williams Show*. All we were was just wallpaper. The

group was *wallpaper*. We were filling up the screen for Mr. Williams. And because we were able to sing we were allowed to do the background music. They got a vocal choir for next to nothing on the show. All those vocal tracks on the Williams show were done by the Goodtimers—and it was tough because there were only two or three of us who could read music: Dave Jackson, myself and Marilyn Miller—and later Johnny Horton, when he came in. But the rest of them couldn't read a note and they had to be rehearsed, above and beyond the long sitting hours waiting to work on the show. Craig couldn't read music, but he was able to write, so you never know, limitations are only created by the mind. Set him free and he was able to create without any restriction."

Brookins saw quite a lot of Smith during the show's first season as the two of them would often drive out to Burbank together for rehearsals and filming. "When I joined the Goodtimers I was living with my parents in Sepulveda in the Valley, and Dad would drive me to Craig's home, because I didn't have a car. Craig had a 1955 or '56 Porsche. Craig thought he was Jimmy Dean for a while. He had high plans for himself. He had an old classic Porsche. I think it was light gray. Cool car! Craig liked fast cars and motorcycles. His parents—all I can say is that they were great parents. I never knew Craig's parents on a very personal basis, but they seemed like very nice folks. They loved Craig, they supported Craig. They thought Craig hung the moon. A doting parent is all one needs in this life, and Craig had that, and he had so many other things. Craig was pretty—not in a feminine sense; it's like Paul Newman is pretty in a rustic way, while Robert Redford is pretty in a handsome way. Craig had leading-man good looks that he got from his mother. She was very sweet, very small, petite."

In conversations with Craig's mother, Brookins learned that she had serious misgivings about Craig's decision to go into show business. She would have preferred that her son go to college. "Craig was smart and he had so many universities interested in him," explains Brookins. "He gave all of that up to join the Good Time Singers. He had received scholastic scholarships. I got scholarships to West Point and Berkeley, and the Naval Academy, for athletics. But Craig had scholarships from all over the place, *scholastic* scholarships, so he was a very smart student. I remember his mother talking about it. She said, 'I don't understand why he wants to do this singing thing.' Even though *she* had done it—but she was speaking

from experience. She *knew*! She was trying to protect her fledgling. But... my daddy did the same, and we don't listen when we're young. We just don't, we just have our ambitions and we try to follow them the best we can."

More than anybody else in the group perhaps, Craig seemed to have that single-minded, focused commitment to make it in the business. "He had that necessary ego with which to really make it in a very competitive business," reflects Brookins. "He had all the tools with which to make it, and he had the most necessary tool, which was insatiable ambition. He had it in spades. Sadly, he didn't move in the circles that would allow him to see the magnificent possibilities that his life could have been."

Aside from their appearances on *The Andy Williams Show*, the Good Time Singers also appeared on the ABC-TV folk music show, *Hootenanny*, on November 2nd, 1963, alongside the Brothers Four, Hoyt Axton and Anita Carter, shot on the campus of UCLA. They were also filmed at the Ice House in Pasadena for an unreleased TV pilot called *The Big Hoot*. "There was Santa Ana winds that day," remembers Bob Flesher. "The outside temperature was about 120 degree or so and the Ice House's air conditioning was on the blink. That made the temperature inside the place with all the lights on about 140 degrees. They put the makeup on us and by the time we were into the song it was all dripping off our faces onto our shirts."

Craig also began getting other job offers. Gordon and Sheila MacRae had a three-week engagement at the ritzy Cocoanut Grove in Hollywood starting December 27th, 1963, and hired Smith and Storm to join their act alongside daughters Meredith and Heather. "Craig was always at my house," recounts Heather, "and we were always singing and stuff. My mother loved Craig. She knew he was very talented and he was writing songs and he was very musical and so she asked him to be in the show. She wanted two guys and two girls, and me and my sister were the two girls."

"They dressed us up in harlequin tights!" laughs Storm. "Well, that's all you need. So Craig and I did this show, and Heather and Meredith too. We oohed and aahed behind Sheila and Gordon, and got paid a lot of money."

Along with all the ooh and aahing, Craig, Michael, Meredith and Heather also had several of their own feature spots in the act singing folk and pop songs, including "If I Had A Hammer," "500 Miles," and,

according to Heather's recollection, the Murmaids' "Popsicles and Icicles." Their performances won them positive shout-outs in *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter*, which wrote, "on the definite plus side was [the] addition to the act of a fresh, young quartet, featuring daughters Heather (17) and Meredith (19) MacRae, balanced by two guitar-strumming folksingers, Craig Smith and Michael Storm. The quartet's very pro singing on 'If I Had A Hammer' made it hard to believe it was their first try as a group."

The Good Time Singers, 1963. Craig Smith top row, second from right.

"We had a lot of fun and we were adorable," laughs Heather. "Craig was always funny. He was famous for making his 'lizard face.' He would hold his eyes open and he would make them real wide and then he would do a lizard tongue. That was one of his signature things. He was always so funny and charming, and we all had a good time together with my sister and I and Craig and Michael. But it was a very, very emotional time because my father was heavily, heavily drinking in those days. One time he fell off the stage and he never came back to the show. My mom just finished the show. It was really awful, but my mom just continued on, and I guess we were continuing on with her."

"Gordon was a good guy, but alcoholic," confirms Storm. "Sheila was a pistol, a wonderful, strong lady who put up with a lot."

Storm remembers another incident with an inebriated Gordon MacRae. "We were up in San Francisco at an ice rink. Ice Capades was being performed and we were singing something there, and Gordon MacRae was singing too, but he was in a sleigh. They towed him around the rink in the sleigh, you could tell he was shit-faced, and as he came by Craig and me, he shouted, 'MER-RY CHRIST-MAS!'" MacRae's cartoonishly slurred delivery cracked them up big-time, and Craig and Michael would impersonate this moment to each other endlessly for days afterwards.

The Good Time Singers recorded their first album at Capitol Records studios in late 1963. Staff producer Curly (a.k.a. Kermit) Walter was in charge of the sessions. "In those days there was kind of a line of A&R producer guys," explains Jackson, "so whoever walked in the door, whoever was next in line to be producer got that act, and Curly was up for this thing, and you could see that he was kind of like, 'Oh God! Who *are* these kids?'—because we really weren't very good, in all honesty. Craig was exuberant and a great pleasure and a pretty good singer, as I recall, but was kind of a flailer on his instrument. None of us was terribly precise, so we got to work with Hal Blaine on drums; Glen Campbell was the rhythm guitarist on the thing, and Tommy Tedesco—the Wrecking Crew band, pretty much. So it went very quickly because of that. They would do the tracks and we'd kind of sing along on vocals, and then they'd leave and we'd take some more time doing the vocals—which again were not very good."

The self-titled album is a fairly generic and pedestrian folk record. Along with traditional fare like “Rock Island Line” and “Banks of the Ohio,” it includes a couple of Drake-Storm compositions, and songs by Rod McKuen, Harry Belafonte, and Phil Ochs. Craig, apparently, did not submit any of his own compositions for consideration—if indeed he had any at this early date—and as a supporting player in a ten-person group, he wasn’t able to make a discernible personal imprint on the record either musically or vocally.

The album was released by Capitol in January 1964, at the same time as a record by a group that was about to blow the entire music industry wide open. *The Good Time Singers* was Capitol T 2041; Capitol T 2047 was *Meet the Beatles*. The death knell of the hootenanny had been sounded with a clash of electric guitars.

In the case of the Good Time Singers, the impact was immediate and devastating. All of Capitol’s resources were being channeled into the Beatles, and their pressing plants were working overtime to keep up with demand. The Good Time Singers were, quite literally, lost in the shuffle. “Half of Tom’s actual physical records ended up in Beatles LP jackets,” remembers Sally Drake, “or the Beatles record ended up in Good Time Singers jackets. It was just a mess. Capitol were doing absolutely nothing for any other act at that label except the Beatles. I told Tom that was karma biting him in the ass!” she chuckles. “I was *glad*! I did not wish them well in that situation.”

For young musicians like Craig Smith, the Beatles opened up a vast new musical horizon that extended far beyond the staid and limiting confines of folk music. Inspired by the Beatles’ ebullient harmonies and keenly inventive songwriting, many folk musicians began gravitating toward rock, in the process creating a new and potent musical hybrid, folk-rock. First and foremost of these new folk-rock groups was the Byrds, formed in mid-1964 as the Jet Set by Gene Clark of the New Christy Minstrels, David Crosby of Les Baxter’s Balladeers, and Jim McGuinn, who’d played as a sideman with the Limeliters and the Chad Mitchell Trio.

Craig Smith would take a little longer to make the transition from folk to folk-rock, but the seeds of change had been planted. In the meantime he remained safely ensconced in the mainstream entertainment world, singing and grinning through numerous *Andy Williams Show* appearances right up

through the end of 1965, and touring the country playing concert halls, folk clubs, night clubs, and state and county fairs.

5

INSTANT FAME

"Good Time Singers Win Instant Fame" ran the headline in the *Los Angeles Times* on May 4th, 1964. "If you've heard those Good Time Singers on Andy Williams' show, you'll have a fair idea of what went on in my office when they walked in with their instruments and gave me a concert," wrote Hedda Hopper, doyenne of the old-school Hollywood gossip columnists. "People in surrounding offices stood outside the door to listen, and right in the middle of the swingin' affair, Shirley Jones came in for an interview. They did an encore for her."

The group's first major concert tour, as part of a variety revue, began later that month, after the TV show had wrapped up filming. On the very eve of the tour, though, Alexandra Brown made an emotional exit from the group. "We were about to leave on the plane for the first trip," remembers Storm, "and Alexandra got to the airport and said, 'I'm not going.' It was that final, and we had no recourse but to say, 'I'm sorry, goodbye.' So we flew off as a group of nine and it stayed that way."

"She just wouldn't get on the plane," confirms Brookins. "She broke down and cried. Tom said, 'Well, what can I say?' I think there was mutual understanding. There was some frustration beyond her just getting on the plane, but I didn't concern myself with that. I was very careful to keep myself free from any political shenanigans. I felt it dangerous."

Being the only black woman in an all-white cast had not been easy for Brown, and Williams and his producers had taken some heat from viewers and sponsors, who apparently weren't comfortable with her presence. "Andy was horrendously plagued that year by the fans," remembers Sally

Drake. “They didn’t want her. She was the first black woman on television in a singing group in an all-white world. They didn’t want that.”

Behind the scenes, the show’s producers had begun to pressure Drake to get rid of her, something that would’ve been relatively easy for him to do as she was clearly unhappy. But for Drake it was a matter of principle. “Tom would’ve yanked the group rather than fire her,” insists Sally Drake. “He would’ve gone the right route and said, ‘Well, then get yourself another group’ if she would’ve wanted to stay.”

Doug Brookins, though, rejects that notion. “Tom Drake would have never given up that money for anybody. That’s just nonsense.”

“Alexandra was not happy,” continues Sally Drake. “She was young and she’d never had any kind of hate mail or anything like that before. She just didn’t like being with the group. They all liked her, but she was young and she was hurt.”

Alexandra’s departure came as a relief to some of the group. “She turned out to be very uncomfortable to work with,” says Jackson. “She was very demanding and sang flat. She had a great voice, but she was kind of a church soloist, and was not good in an ensemble.”

There may have been another, more personal component to Brown’s decision to leave. Rumor has it that although she had a steady boyfriend, she and Craig had secretly been having an affair. “Oh, Craig had a thing for *her*!” remembers Doug. “Oh boy! He really liked her a lot—and she liked him. They liked each other a lot, but she had a boyfriend.”

Taking that covert, mixed-race relationship out on the road may have been one complication too many for Alexandra, who soon afterwards found a more suitable showcase for her talents as a member of Ray Charles’ backing singers, the Raelettes.

Prior to the unexpected departure of Brown, there had been another lineup change. Drake had dismissed Bob Flesher before the season’s final episode, so the now nine-piece group also began the tour with a new banjo player, Johnny Horton (not to be confused with the famous country singer).

The Good Time Singers were a part of a concert tour put together by Edward T. Sherman, who had been a hugely successful vaudeville promoter back in the 1930s. Billed as The Beverly Hillbillies Revue, the show harked back to that old-time tradition. Irene Ryan (Granny), Donna Douglas (Elly Mae) and Max Baer Jr. (Jethro) from the cast of the popular television show

topped the bill with some musical and comedy shtick, highlighted by a bit where Elly Mae and Jethro taught Granny how to do the twist. The Good Time Singers opened Act II of a bill that also included musical anarchists Spike Jones and His City Slickers, novelty country duo Homer & Jethro, the juggling Rudenko Brothers, musical humorist Yonely, and the Maldonado Dancers. The tour opened at the Long Beach Arena before criss-crossing the country to hit 17 cities in 15 days, playing in venues of 10,000 seats or more.

The entire cast traveled city to city in a huge old Lockheed Constellation. "God only knows if it would still fly!" laughs Michael Storm. "But we had this whole plane to ourselves—Homer & Jethro, Spike Jones and his orchestra. Sometimes John Yonely was on the plane but sometimes you looked out the window and he'd be flying his own plane next to us. Homer would open his banjo case and one side would be his banjo and the other side was a fifth of bourbon. So there was always drinking. Spike Jones and his band were off the rails! Some guy would come in suspended by a wire playing a bass fiddle upside down. We performed every night and toured in between. We did nightclubs, college concerts, and fair dates. Fair dates were a hoot. It was all a hoot. We had the material down pat and everyone loved us. We'd sing, and then go off and spend the rest of the night at the fair or at the venue. Then when the show was over, we'd go back to the airport, get in this old Constellation airplane and fly to the next date."

After returning from the Beverly Hillbillies tour, the Good Time Singers went into Capitol studios to complete work on their second album, *One Step More*. Curly Walter was again in the producer's chair, while David Gates—later to find fame with Bread—was one of the arrangers. Gates also contributed one song, "Hoo How, What Now," as did Storm and Drake ("One Step More") and Jackson and Montgomery ("Li'l Ole Road"). Craig's contribution was, again, minimal—just another voice in the chorus. Capitol held off until October to release the LP, by which time the group would be back on the nation's TV screens with *The Andy Williams Show*. The group had been signed for another season with the show, a deal which included a significant pay raise. Also, the show would now be broadcast weekly rather than biweekly.

Days after finishing the album, the group flew to Washington, D.C. to begin another concert tour, this one with singing star Mitzi Gaynor. Their busy live schedule continued through the summer and fall, highlighted by a prestigious guest spot with the Burbank Symphony Orchestra at the Starlight Bowl in August. On July 8th, 1964, the *Hollywood Reporter* ran a piece lauding the group's "instant" success, and revealing that they had grossed an estimated $250,000 in less than a year (close to $2,000,000 in today's money). The article went on to state that: "Rough estimates of their gross income in the next year, starting in September, range from a half-million dollars to the magical one million mark."

1965 INDIANA STATE FAIR

GOOD TIME SINGERS . . .

In the short span of time that they've been together the Good Time Singers have shown that talen, given the chance, is the real key to success. Tom Drake, leader of the group, heard that Andy Williams was looking for a group of ten singers to appear regularly on his TV show. Tom organized the group over a weekend, rehearsed with them for the first time on a Monday, and Thursday they auditioned. The following Monday they were signed to a contract.

In one week the talented ten (seven boys and three girls) found themselves in a position that most groups fail to achieve in a lifetime. Since that time they have gone on to over a dozen appearances on the Williams Show, guest-starred on ABC-TV's popular "Hootenanny", have been featured in a number of West Coast concerts, and signed an exclusive contract with Capitol.

What has "made" the Good Time Singers? Personality and voice is part of the answer. Each member of the group is a vocalist capable of singing a solo and each has his own personality. "Although we're all part of one group," Tom explained, "that doesn't mean we all have to be the same. Each of us has different likes and dislikes. There's always someone in the group with a new and fresh idea."

A great deal of the credit for the Good Time Singers' success belongs to Tom. During his college career he was a serious student and critic of American literature and poetry and he became well-versed in the folk lore of the U.S. His folk lore and poetry background is a major influence in almost all of the Good Time Singers' songs today. A natural left-hander, Tom played the guitar upside-down and backwards rather than reverse the strings. This unusual style remains his trademark today.

After graduation from UCLA, Tom went to San Francisco where he met the Kingston Trio. Together with members of the Trio he collaborated on two songs—"The Escape of Old John Web" and "Who's Gonna Hold Her Hand?" With his copyright earnings, he returned to Los Angeles and eventually became a high school English teacher during the day—at nights he sang in the local folk music haunts. It was during one of his nightly appearances that Tom heard about the Williams Show and the Good Time Singers were created.

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Indiana State Fair program, 1965.

The Good Time Singers visiting NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston, Texas, in May 1965. Craig in striped T-shirt.

Although it's highly unlikely they ever hit that "magical one million mark," the group worked hard during 1964 and 1965. When they weren't rehearsing or shooting the television show, they were traveling and performing live across the country, especially during the summer months.

"It was fun," recalls Storm. "Jesus, it was fun! We had fun, saw places, went places... I must say that the underlying description of the group was nine really nice people. There were very few arguments or disagreements. I don't recall any friction or any blowouts. Craig was right for it. He was absolutely a dynamite guy to have on your team."

Eight or nine years older than most of the others, Drake was the leader, organizer, and disciplinarian of the group, with Storm as his dependable right-hand man. The rest of the group, most of them still teenagers, could often be rambunctious—especially Craig. "In those days, if we all went into a restaurant, the likelihood is we could break out into some song, sitting around the booths, you know?" recalls Jackson. "If four or five of us from the group were on the road or on the bus or on the airplane, we'd hit on all

the girls, we'd roam the aisles and smoke and offer cigarettes to people... I mean, it was a lot looser then!"

"Craig almost got us thrown out of Canada one time," laughs Lee Montgomery, "because he was joking around. We were going across the border and the immigration people were not too friendly and Craig was making a joke about something, I don't remember what, and the immigration guy said, 'I don't wanna let you people into the country!' So Craig cooled it."

It was Lee Montgomery and David Jackson who Craig tended to hang out with most while out on the road. "I think that we just liked each other and just kind of palled around," says David. "We saw the world from our particular vantage points, and we happened to be standing next to each other. We were young—18, 19, 20—and trying to experiment with every possible female we could possibly experiment with. I remember that being the goal: to go out and have as much fun as possible and hope we never had to go back to the hotel."

One of the strongest memories Jackson has of this period is an encounter he and Craig had with jazz legend Duke Ellington and his collaborator Billy Strayhorn in New York. "It was the winter. It was very cold outside and we went to the Brasserie on East 53rd in midtown. We probably arrived at about 2 a.m. We'd probably been out carousing, which he and I did quite a bit. We got something to eat, sat down, and started listening to a conversation at the table next to us. Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn were sitting there in their coats, and they sat for two hours—and I remember it being two hours because we'd got there at 2:00 and we left right at 4:00. Craig and I didn't say a word, we just listened to them talk, and we played freeform chess. We'd move the salt shaker and then, 'OK, your move.' We sat there and did that for two hours and listened to Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington. We were young, but knew that we were in the presence of greatness."

The Clinger Sisters were a youthful vocal group who were signed to the same agency as the Good Time Singers, G.A.C. (General Artists Corporation), and worked the same state and county fair circuit during the summer and early fall months. The four eldest sisters, Melody, Peggy, Patsy and Debra, were aged between 15 and 18 when they first met Craig Smith at the Allentown Fair in Pennsylvania in August 1965. Craig's natural

charisma made an immediate impression on the girls. “That smile and that pizzazz and that personality!” beams Patsy Clinger. “He was so darling and so fun and so effervescent, and just…” She searches for the right word… “Unaffected. Totally unaffected. Even at the time, he was that kind of guy that when he smiled—*gliss!*— he had one of those million-dollar smiles. And he was a great performer, wonderful onstage.

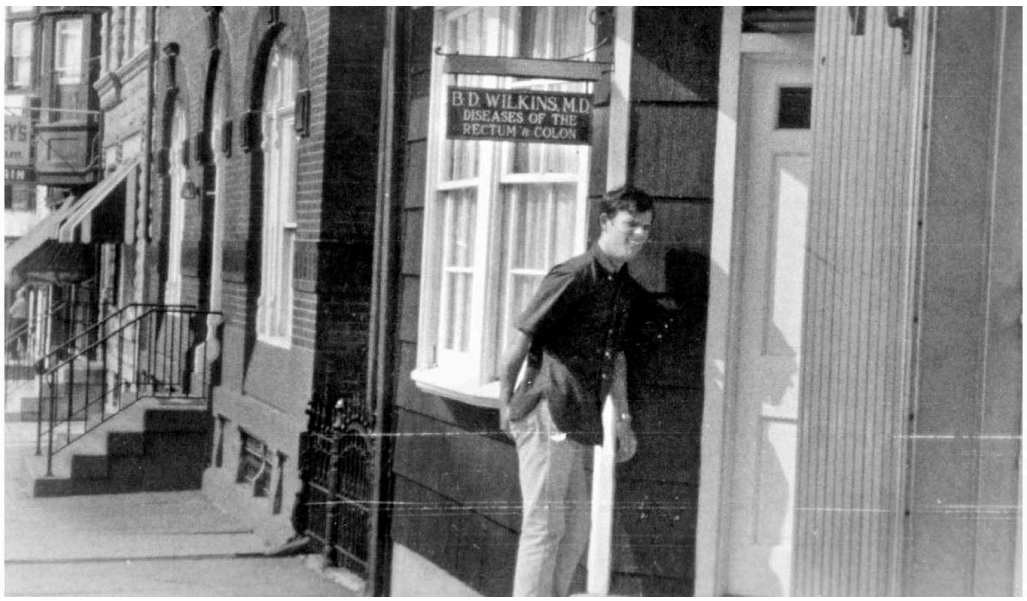
“Sometimes we’d play two shows depending on if it was a weekend,” she continues, “and in between we’d just hang out, play music, play guitars. We always had our guitars; we played these little banjo ukuleles as well. We would just sit around and talk and have so much fun. Craig was just in it for the party, for the fun. I remember my sister Peggy had such a mad crush on him. Nothing happened—maybe there was a hug or something. I assume he had probably ten girlfriends at the time—I don’t *know* that, but he was older and she was just 16. But she was just, ‘Ah! He’s so *darling*!’ She wouldn’t quit talking about how this Craig Smith had just definitely wooed her.”

The Clinger Sisters. Left to right: Debra, Melody, Peggy, Patsy.

Peggy Clinger wasn’t the only girl being wooed by Craig during this period. “Craig was a ladies’ man. Truly,” recalls Brookins. “He’d smile at them and they would be drooling at his feet. He always had a girl. Different ones. To show you the kind of fellow he was: Hayley Mills came on the show. She was doing a tune called ‘A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine

go down' and Craig got enthralled with her, and before you know it they were driving off together on his motorcycle." The one-time Disney child star was 19 years old when she appeared on *The Andy Williams Show* during the Good Time Singers' third and, as it turned out, final season.

In September they performed alongside one of the biggest stars to ever appear on the show, Judy Garland. Maybe Craig would have had the opportunity to tell Garland she'd once sang a song written by his great uncle, Charles Gabriel Jr. But probably not. As David Jackson recalls, "She walked in at 10 a.m. on Monday morning in the rehearsal hall where we were standing around and rehearsing the tune, and she had a tall Dixie cup and she said it was Coca-Cola. But as soon as she walked in the door, from about 20 feet away we could smell the bourbon. She looked very unhappy and I felt very sorry for her the whole week." "It wasn't a Dixie cup, OK?" recalls Lee Montgomery. "It was more like a Big Gulp."



Craig clowning around in Allentown, Pennsylvania, August 1965. (Photo: Michael Storm)

"The first thing I remember about Judy Garland was, because I was curious, I looked at her wrists and saw the scars," recalls Storm. "And that brought it real to me that this was a delicate, sick, fragile person. She couldn't walk by herself. We had to walk her, one of us on either side, down these stairs. She was singing 'Clang, clang, clang goes the trolley'—one of her songs from one of her movies. So she would walk down and we would

hold her—she weighed nothing, she was paper. I remember walking her down and smiling benignly, and she would sing her song and we would ooh and aah. And we did that, and after the first rehearsal, the producer came to the Good Time Singers and said, 'OK, we're going to tape this next dress rehearsal just in case, because she's frail.' And so we taped that rehearsal show and it was good. And then it was time to do the final show….

"BANG!" he exclaims. "She gave it everything! She now weighed 150 pounds—she was struttin' she was divin'—she didn't need us! It was a transition that you could only imagine, and she *nailed it*! Nailed every step, every move, every note—she was great! It was a great experience. She was a pathetic individual, but it was showbiz. 'When the lights are on, stand back, watch me work!' Marlene Dietrich was another frail one who, when the lights went on: BANG! Nailed it to the wall. The pros are pros for a reason. They can limp along and throw their fits and have their problems, but when the light comes on, they'd give it all."

Garland and Williams also sang a medley together of some of her best-known songs with the Good Time Singers seated around them in black evening wear crooning their wallpaper backups. The emotion in Garland's performance radiates out in concentric circles, and watching Craig's rapt, smiling face you can sense he is completely caught up in these never-to-be-repeated moments, consciously absorbing some of Garland's flickering, doomed magic.

Happy. Smiling. Fun. These are the words people used most frequently when talking to me about Craig Smith. Nothing seemed to bother Craig. He never lost his temper, never blew his cool. That ten-thousand-kilowatt smile was an almost permanent fixture on his face.

"Craig was just a delight," remembers David Jackson. "Happy all the time. That smile you see in the pictures is what he wore almost at all times, with very few exceptions. But when there were exceptions we knew something was amiss because he would get quite dour. But it wouldn't last very long. I lost track of him. I understand that he became homeless for a while, and somebody said that he didn't have that smile any longer, and I wonder if it was depression or something like that. Maybe there was some inkling of it previously."

Jackson doesn't remember any particular trigger for these rare dour moods of Craig's. Were they symptoms of a bipolar personality or something deeper? "From my vantage point there was no trigger," says Jackson. "Nothing I saw that could have caused that. It would happen, but it was so stark in relation to his normal countenance."

Doug Brookins also recalls that Craig would occasionally become withdrawn and uncommunicative, as if a dark veil had been drawn across his face. "I never saw him outright lose his temper," recalls Doug, "but as time progressed there were personality clashes between us. So essentially, even while we were in the same group, we went totally different directions because I just didn't want to associate with him—and I didn't know why. It was just a sense. There's an old saying about intuition, and I've always followed my intuition, even when I was a little boy I understood it. I knew there was something wrong, but I couldn't put my finger on it. I would try to promote conversation and there was just some dark screen that came in front of him. He wouldn't even respond to friendly conversation. I'd just go, *Wow. He must be focused on something really more important than what I have to say*. And that seemed to just increase over time. So when that dark screen came up in front of him, I just walked away."

That dark screen can be discerned fleetingly on an episode of the show broadcast in September 1965. The Good Time Singers are seated around Williams as he sings one of his soporific classics, "That Old Feeling." Dressed in a bright pink sports jacket and matching silk tie, Craig appears uncharacteristically uncomfortable as he croons his backing harmonies along with the rest of the group. His affable smile flashes and flickers, like a short-circuiting light bulb. Then, for a few seconds, it slips completely, his expression blackens and he's miles away—"a century of distance," as he would later sing, from the people around him. Just as quickly the smile reappears, he glances around reassuringly, and he's back in the moment.

Judy Garland performing with Andy Williams and the Good Time Singers in September 1965 on *The Andy Williams Show*. Craig Smith (face obscured) is fourth from right.

"That's the Craig that evolved from 1963 to 1966," Brookins says. "As those years passed he did become more and more distant. So he was into his own thing, which was essentially his writing, I guess, and his self-promotion and hopes for success. And he was very secretive; everything he did was close to the vest. If you approached him on a personal level, even as a friend, literally a screen would just—like pulling down a shade—when you go to your window to pull down a shade, that's what I would see, just this screen—with little tiny holes in it. You could see his face through it, but the screen was black. I just... I just... It just so *spooked* me. I just said, 'Who needs this?' And I'd walk away. I thought, *Well, I have to work with him, but I don't have to associate with him.*"

In retrospect, reflects Heather MacRae, the luminosity of Craig's smile was almost too intense. "The thing about Craig was, he didn't seem crazy, but he was always smiling, and you know when somebody smiles all the time it's a little suspicious, I think. He definitely was the golden boy—he was popular, everybody loved him, he was funny—but he had almost like a maniacal smile sometimes. So when I think about him in my mind's eye there's something a little bit manic about him."

In social situations Craig was outgoing, happy-go-lucky, and gregarious, but he also had a private, secretive side. He didn't broadcast his creative ambitions to those around him, not even his closest friends. In 1965 he had began to write songs in earnest, but he did so behind closed doors, and seldom discussed them with anyone. It was something that he kept to himself. Few of his acquaintances during this period were even aware that he had ambitions in that direction.

"I knew he was an artist," reflects David Jackson. "I knew that he was a good songwriter and a good singer, and he was going to be successful. I remember knowing that. He had all of the prerequisites necessary. He was aware he had the talent, much as anyone else would, but it wasn't any big deal to him."

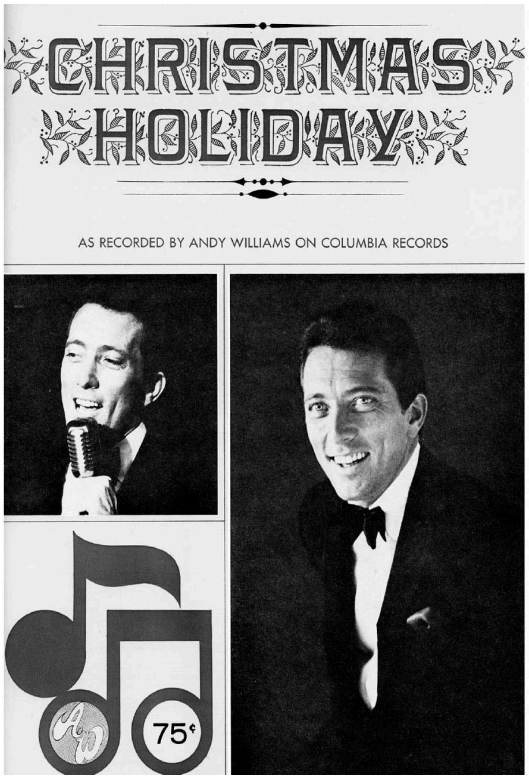
"He was the kind of person that felt like if he talked about what he was doing that he would lose control of it and someone else would come in and take advantage of it," reckons Brookins. "So he kept pretty quiet. Kept things close to the vest."

Craig's taciturn attitude toward his songwriting did not, apparently, mask any insecurity about the quality of his work. After penning a light, seasonal ditty called "Christmas Holiday," he took it straight to Andy Williams. Williams liked the song enough to record it, and in late 1965 it was released on his Columbia Records album *Merry Christmas*, right alongside a range of holiday evergreens that included "Winter Wonderland," "Silver Bells" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." The album went on to become one of the biggest-selling Christmas albums of the era, appearing in the Billboard Top Five Christmas Albums charts five years in a row, and eventually selling over a million copies, presumably netting Craig a jackpot in songwriting royalties.

While most people would have taken some pride in this accomplishment, Craig never even mentioned it to the other Good Time Singers or to any of his friends subsequently. None of them had any idea Andy had recorded any of Craig's songs. This apparent modesty or secrecy was a pattern that would continue in the years ahead. While he had the confidence to put his songs into the hands of major artists, Craig never boasted of his achievements, he would just move on to the next song.

The Good Time Singers had provided Craig a secure foothold in the industry, but as he found confidence as a songwriter he began to envision a

new, more rock-based musical direction. He and Lee Montgomery began rehearsing some of Craig's new songs together with the view to launching themselves as a folk-rock duo: Craig & Lee. According to Lee's recollection, after recording a couple of demos, they were flown out to New York for a meeting at Columbia Records. "We were gonna cut a deal," remembers Lee, "and I got aced out. It came as a shock to me because Craig and I were getting along fine. It left a very bad taste in my mouth."



In the autumn of 1965, Craig had successfully auditioned for one of the lead roles in a new ABC television series. This meant he would be leaving *The Andy Williams Show*, the Good Time Singers, and Craig & Lee, before the end of the year.

Lee Montgomery didn't take the breakup of the duo well. "I remember it was on the set of *The Andy Williams Show* I found out about it, and I flipped out, man. I was very upset. I mean, I didn't get violent or nothing, but I said, 'Why? Why? Why? *Why?*' I was very shocked and very disappointed for quite a while. But I got over it. It turned out for the best. I had a great, long career in jingles. I did a lot of well-known commercials:

Stater Brothers ran for about 20 years, on and off, there was Chevy trucks, 'Welcome to Miller Time'—I did a lot of great things. I traveled around the country. I was on trains most of the time in the 1980s between New York, California and Chicago, and I finally settled in Chicago in 1984."

Montgomery bristled when pressed for more details about the Craig & Lee project. "My feelings are it was a great duo and too bad it didn't happen, and I quickly got over it. OK? I moved on with my life."

Lee and I make plans to talk again, but a few days later he leaves me a voicemail: "Mike: it's Lee Montgomery in Chicago. I can't answer any more questions about Craig. That was 50 years ago or better and left a very bad taste in my mouth. I'm sorry Craig had a tragic life, I wish you well, but I can't help you any further, OK? So, that's it."

While the Craig & Lee duo had ended acrimoniously in October of 1965, Smith and Montgomery worked together again, a few months later, on a Good Time Singers recording session for Columbia Records. The January 10th, 1966 recording date, produced by Larry Marks and arranged by David Gates, yielded four songs: "I Care Babe," written by Craig, "I Can't Stay" (which may also have been one of Craig's songs), and two songs penned by Michael Storm, "So Glad" and "Raindrops." Smith, Storm, David Jackson and John Horton are listed on the musicians' union session contracts, along with Gates and a small team of session musicians that included Glen Campbell, Hal Blaine, Larry Knechtel, and Neil LeVang. A single pairing "So Glad" and "I Care Babe" was given limited release by Columbia on March 21st. Highlighted by a catchy 12-string guitar figure, "So Glad" is a jaunty folk-rock tune showcasing Storm's lead vocal. On "I Care Babe," though, it's Craig and Lee in the vocal spotlight for a masterful exercise in big production L.A. folk-rock. It's the Turtles' "It Ain't Me Babe" meets the Byrds' "Mr. Tambourine Man" with a dash of "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" Spector-drama on the bridge, Montgomery's sonorous baritone taking the Bill Medley role while Craig soars up top Bobby Hatfield-style.

The single would be the last release to bear the Good Time Singers' name. By the time it was released, the group was already winding down. The Williams show had elected not to renew their contract, and the ensemble had shed many of its original members, including Craig, Margaret Patton, Marilyn Miller, and even Michael Storm. "Over the period of those

years, people left, girls were replaced, and finally it was just no longer any fun," recalls Brookins. "The contract not being renewed in 1966 was the impetus for me to offer my resignation. I said to Tom Drake, 'I don't know what your view is on things. Nobody listens. Nobody wants to do anything new. We play the same songs day in and day out that we played back in 1963, and music has changed. You either change or you die. None of you really want to experiment in anything and I don't understand why.'" Drake himself had long since lost interest in the group, and stepped down soon afterwards to pursue a writing career, handing over the leadership reins to Johnny Horton. The Good Time Singers name still had a certain marquee value, and various editions of the group continued to play for several more years throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Meanwhile, a new confluence of currents was sweeping Craig Smith in another direction altogether.

Craig Smith, Chris Ducey and Suzannah Jordan in *The Happeners*.
Digital images courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

6

FOLK & ROLL

Right on! Schedule—at least a year behind the times, American television was anxious to keep pace with the youth culture explosion triggered by the Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, and the rest of the new rock vanguard. On September 8th, 1965 ads appeared in *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter* seeking "Folk & Roll Musicians-Singers for acting roles in new TV series … Want spirited Ben Frank's types." Ben Frank's was a 24-hour coffee shop on the Strip, famous as a hangout spot for longhaired musicians and freaks, including Craig Smith.

Craig is said to be one of the estimated four hundred hopefuls who auditioned to be one of the "4 insane boys, age 17–21" needed for the TV pilot of *The Monkees*. Unlike his old school mate Micky Dolenz, who already had one starring TV role under his belt with *Circus Boy*, Craig didn't make the cut. But *The Monkees* wasn't the only "Folk & Roll" TV show casting at the time. Plautus Productions, the company headed up by producer Herb Brodkin, was developing a one-hour show called *The Happeners*, based around the adventures of a Greenwich Village folk-rock group. Brodkin was a TV heavyweight renowned for serious, socially provocative dramas like *Playhouse 90, The Nurses, Espionage*, and the Emmy award-winning courtroom drama *The Defenders*. "Our reputation," explains Brodkin's longtime business partner Robert "Buzz" Berger, "was as people who did edgy dramas like *The Defenders* and stuff that they would say in today's market was 'torn from the headlines.' For us, *The Happeners* was a departure, because if it was based on anything, it was based on the Beatles movies."

While *The Happeners* would be lighter fare than most Brodkin productions, it would include some real-life grit and social commentary as a matter of course. Ernest Kinoy, who'd won an Emmy the previous year for an episode of *The Defenders*, wrote the script for the pilot episode, and had already mapped out back stories for the main characters. David Greene signed on as director. A flamboyant Englishman, Greene had already directed numerous TV shows for Plautus including episodes of *The Defenders* and *The Nurses*. "He was a nutty, amazing, wonderful personality," says Berger. Fred Weintraub, owner of the Bitter End club in Greenwich Village, was brought in as an adviser, and on his recommendation they hired Bob Bowers as musical director. Bowers was working at the time with the Serendipity Singers, a folk group managed by Weintraub. Together with lyricist Jim Butler, he would write the songs for the show.

Weintraub and Bowers would also help select the cast, which called for three young musicians, two male, one female, who were able to act as well as sing. Casting for *The Happeners* was even more rigorous than for *The Monkees*, with over a thousand young musicians vying for the three lead roles at open auditions in New York and Los Angeles. Craig Smith was one of them.

"As I remember, he was the first one we cast," says Buzz Berger. "He came in like all the rest of the kids and auditioned, and he was obviously a good-looking kid and he was a pretty accomplished musician on the guitar. We saw an awful lot of kids and he just jumped out at us. His voice was absolutely pure, and he was just a pro."

An article in the *Los Angeles Times* described just one day of the cattle call auditions for *The Happeners*, which in L.A. were held at Paramount Studios. "Within a couple of cacophonic weeks, a cigar-smoking, somber-suited, soft-spoken mature man named Buzz Berger has heard more than 1,000 rock, folk, folk-rock, roll-folk acts on both ends of the United States," wrote Art Seidenbaum. ("That's funny," interjects Buzz. "I never smoked cigars. That was Herb. Herb was a cigar-chomper. I smoked a pipe.") The article goes on to describe some of the 110 hopefuls who tried out that day, including Micky Dolenz, who auditioned under his *Circus Boy* stage name, Mickey Braddock. "Out of these 110, Berger found six he would like to see-hear a second time," the article continued. "From those six, plus the culls

from the other 955 acts, there would be three plum roles. Plums in the planning stages, mind you. Brodkin has not yet sold his series. All these shining kids are gambling even if they get the jobs."

Actually, the odds were extremely good that ABC was going to buy the series and launch it in its fall 1966 season. "We had a commitment to do two pilots for ABC and one of them was to go on the air," explains Berger. "It was what they used to call a 'must buy' contract. So there were two pilots. *One-Eyed Jacks Are Wild*, which we filmed in England and Frank Schaffner directed, and then the second one was *The Happeners*. Of those two, *The Happeners* for sure was the one I would have gone for."

One of those "shining kids" who got a call-back that particular day was 18-year-old Chris Ducey: "One thwacking good young man, Chris Dulcey [sic], could hardly believe the good fortune of being considered for a prospective series," wrote Seidenbaum. "When Berger told Dulcey [sic] that he'd like to have him back, Chris' jaw dropped, his eyebrows quivered, his neck jerked. 'You would?' he croaked, falling back on his adolescent timbre."

It wasn't until the fourth round of auditions that Ducey met Craig Smith, but from the moment the two first sang together, it was evident they had something special. Craig & Lee ended right there. "There was definitely a good blend of our voices right away," remembers Ducey. "I have kind of that cutting tenor voice and I go well with a nice round voice, and he has more of a round voice. Any time I blend with people, I have fun and I'll do it again. It's like good drugs."

It was the beginning a creative musical partnership that would last for the next two-and-a-half years.

Chris Ducey was reluctant at first to talk about his days with Craig Smith. Too many bad memories. "That's an anthill I don't want to kick," he insisted when I first contacted him in 2002. Ducey has continued to evolve as a songwriter and is dismissive of his early work. "I didn't think it existed anymore," he admits. "I'd almost totally 100% forgotten about it. I moved on and went though such deep worlds after that, that it was only shallow compared to what I got into, in a certain realm. When you come through the shallows, you don't remember them too much once you're out in the reef. Until you get back to them. We didn't dwell on those years, and I didn't play any of the music until very recently."

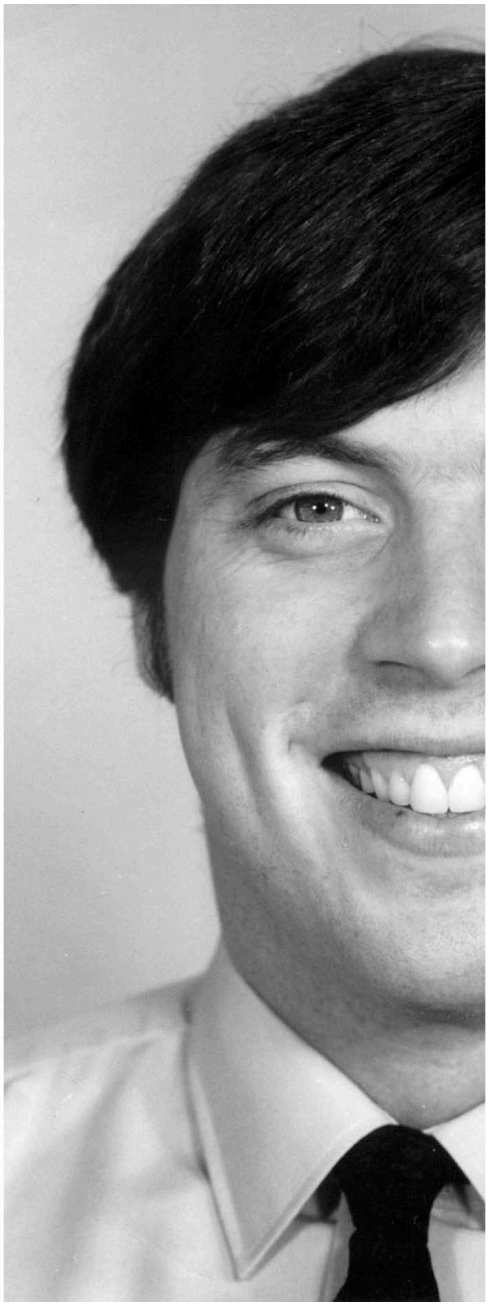
Eventually Chris relents. He doesn't like long phone conversations though, so I'll have to fly up to the Bay Area to interview him in person. So on November 1st, 2002, that's what I do. Chris picks me and my wife Anja up at the airport, and drives us out to his home in Marin County, where we spend a pleasant weekend with him and his wife Nancy. Fueled by a couple of bottles of good red wine, the interview lasts late into the night, and Chris lays out his entire story, on and off the record.

Filming *The Happeners* in New York's Central Park in late 1965.
Digital image courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

He grew up in the middle-class neighborhood of Bay Ridge in Brooklyn, New York. His mother was Italian and his father was Irish, and the family owned a luncheonette on 6th Street. The Duceys were not a particularly musical family, but there was a junior grand piano in the house, and Chris took piano lessons in Catholic school, where he was also in the choir.

"My first musical high was in church," he remembers. "It was on a Christmas Eve. I was probably nine years old. There was this beautiful Midnight Mass, and it's all voodoo because it's all in Latin. And the voodoo was good, with all the incense and all that stuff. Anyway, it got to the choir

part and not only did we sing in Latin, but at the end we sang a song, as I remember, called 'Holy Holy Holy,' and we sang that SO BIG as a choir—and it was a big choir anyway—but because of the highness of the occasion—Christmas Eve, end of the service, everybody's standing up joyfully and leaving, and we're pumping on this. Sister Marcella was the choir instructor and also the organist and she is sitting in the middle, and she is *wailing* on the organ and we are wailing out and when it should have stopped she said, 'Again!' and we went higher. It was the first time I got a musical high and it was absolutely fantastic because of the power of all the voices and the organ, the way she was pumping it—it was like we were at Carnegie Hall, we were at the Philharmonic, we were *on stage* as far as I was concerned. Because in my head—I don't think I had my eyes open, I think I was in my head—and in my head I was on stage. It was a stage experience for me, and it was my first musical high and I kept on going from that point on."



Chris Ducey’s headshot for the Ashley-Famous Agency, 1965.

In 1958, when Chris was around 11 years old, the family moved to Okinawa, Japan, and it was there that he first began singing and playing rock & roll in various teenage club bands. In 1961 the Ducey family returned to the States and settled in upstate New York in the town of Cornwall. His father was working in the Dominican Republic at the time, and one day brought back a cheap guitar for Chris. The neck had warped on

the flight, but Chris played it anyway, eventually replacing it with a Gibson. He got caught up in the folk/hootenanny craze, and around late 1962 formed his own Kingston Trio-style combo, called We Three. The group played in the local clubs, but broke up when one of the group's other singers, Dennis Berger, went away to college.

Ducey continued on as a solo performer, modeling himself on Dylan, complete with a harmonica rack around his neck. John "Spider" Koerner, Dave Ray and Tony Glover's seminal 1963 album *Blues Rags & Hollers* also made a big impression on him, as did the blues style of John Hammond, Jr., whom he caught one night at the Gaslight Café in Greenwich Village.

Chris attended college for a while, but "never really licked the college thing," ditching entire semesters and eventually dropping out completely. One winter he hitchhiked out to L.A. with his guitar on his back, stopping along the way in New Orleans and Texas. He stayed for a while with an aunt and uncle in Tarzana, and by the fall of 1965 had settled permanently in the Valley, enrolling in Pierce College in Woodland Hills. Ducey was still in his first semester at Pierce when he ditched class to attend the first open audition for *The Happeners*. As Chris recalls, there were dozens of young guys and girls there, all carrying acoustic guitars. Chris sang one of his own songs at the audition and was told to "come back next Thursday at 4 o'clock." He made his way through three more rounds of auditions, and on the fourth occasion he met Craig Smith for the first time. Chris assumed Craig had been called back for the same number of auditions.

"We were then called back for a fifth time," recalls Ducey, "by which time there was 12 of us: four girls and eight guys, and they split us up into trios. Craig and I were teamed with a girl called Suzannah Jordan with long dark hair and big doe eyes."

Seventeen-year-old Suzannah (real name Susan Clute) was from San Diego, where she attended Hoover High School. Her mother, Sue White, was a local TV personality on the popular San Diego morning show *Sun Up;* she'd replaced a young Raquel Welch. Suzannah had been working as a folk singer at a club called Pearl Street West in La Jolla. She also sang R&B with the Nomads, and fronted a rock & roll band called Brandy & the New Breed. She and Craig had actually crossed paths a year earlier, in November 1964, when Suzannah was the opening act for a Good Time Singers show at

the San Diego Convention Hall, but she doesn't recall actually meeting Craig at that time.

Suzannah's TV audition happened quite by chance. "I was playing a coffee house in La Jolla," she remembers, "and a producer, Sam Goldwyn Jr., heard me and wanted me to audition for a movie, *A Covenant With Death*, that they were filming at MGM Studios. So I went up [to Los Angeles] to audition for that and while I was there I found a copy of *Variety* in the wastepaper basket and it had the advertisement for the series *The Happeners*. So I auditioned for that, too."

After Suzannah had been teamed up with Chris and Craig, the trio was instructed to go off into a corner and learn a song together—as was each of the other remaining trios. As Chris recalls, they quickly learned "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." Each of the trios in succession then sang their selection for the casting directors. Chris, Craig, and Suzannah were then informed that they had passed the audition and would be flying to New York in about four days' time for the final phase of the casting. There they would compete against another trio of youngsters, who'd been selected from the New York casting call. The project they'd been selected for, they were now informed, would likely be airing on ABC Television.

Passing *The Happeners* audition presented a dilemma for Suzannah. "I had also just auditioned for Bob Rafelson and his team for *The Monkees*, and I actually got both parts. Originally they were gonna have a girl sidekick for *The Monkees*. My mother decided that the better pilot on the face of it was the Herb Brodkin ABC pilot. It was an hour long and in color, and I would've been starring in that as opposed to being a sidekick so we actually chose to take that. I was 17. We lied about my age. You had to be 18 so we lied about it and they didn't check."

A few days later, in October 1965, the trio flew to New York first class, all expenses paid. "Rudolf Nureyev was on one of our flights," recalls Chris, who remembers Craig being abnormally excited about the encounter. "He seemed a bit overly sexed by the meeting or moment," recalls Chris. "I thought that was a little strange!"

In New York they were taught four songs written for the show by Bob Bowers and Jim Butler, one of them a new arrangement of a traditional song, "All the Pretty Little Horses." They spent the next several days rehearsing at the Bitter End, which Weintraub made available to the trio

every afternoon from 1:00 until 5:00. Afterwards they hung out in the Village soaking up the vibe and catching as many acts as they could, including Woody Allen's standup show.

The final audition was held on a soundstage at Pathé Studio on 105th Street, where a coffeehouse set had been constructed for the show. Brodkin, Berger, Kinoy, Bowers and Weintraub were all there to pass judgment on the two competing groups of singers, along with ABC president Leonard Goldenson, and Ted Ashley of the Ashley-Famous talent agency.

Both groups came out and performed Bowers' songs, and afterwards it was Chris, Craig, and Suzannah who got the call. "'Ashley-Famous Agency wants to sign you tomorrow,'" they were told, according to Chris. "'Go back home to California. You're back here on a shooting schedule starting November 1st.' This was all in October. So we came home. Our whole lives were turned into good."

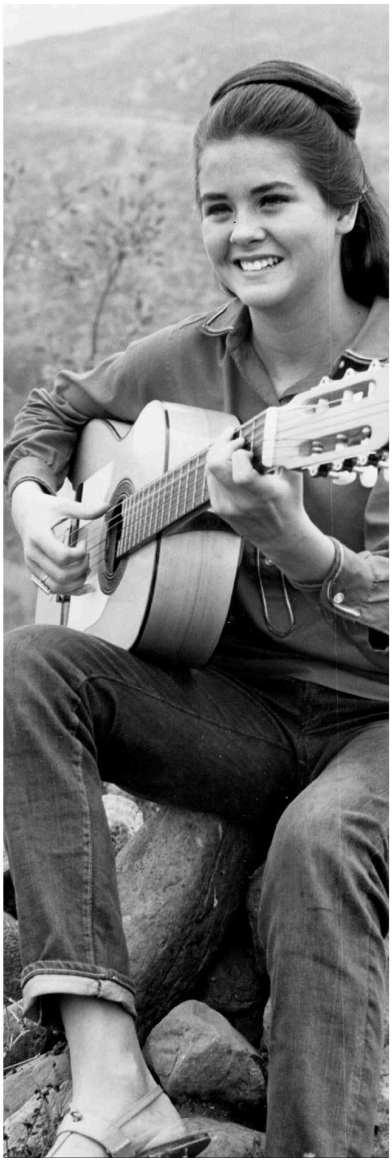
According to Suzannah, Craig may have been a shoe-in for the *Happeners* role all along. "Craig was obviously a star already," she says, "the whole way everybody treated him. He was *numero uno*. I almost got the feeling we were formed around him. So the feeling was that *he* was the star; he was the number one. He had the most lines in the pilot. The pilot was centered around his story. But he was such a sweetheart, a sweet guy, no airs, just fun, fun, fun. A lot of personality and such a talented guy. I looked up to him. I just followed him around, and like a big brother he took me under his wing. A super guy. He was the one with all the hype and he had the big agency behind him."

It was through Craig that Chris and Suzannah signed on with a lawyer, Hal Kant, who already represented the Good Time Singers, and would later take on the Grateful Dead (whom he managed with great success until his death in 2008). "I gave him his slogan," laughs Chris: "If you can't go to Heaven, go to Hal."

As it turned out, Hal's legal muscle was needed immediately, as several weeks before *The Happeners* auditions, Ducey had signed a deal for an album of his songs, to be called *Songs of Protest and Anti-Protest*.

"I met this guy through a connection," recounts Ducey. "Jack Millman was his name. I walked into his office and he was jackin' me up. 'Oh, I gotta hear all your songs.' I had my guitar and it was my first exposure to anyone in Hollywood. It was right on Vine Street, this little funky office.

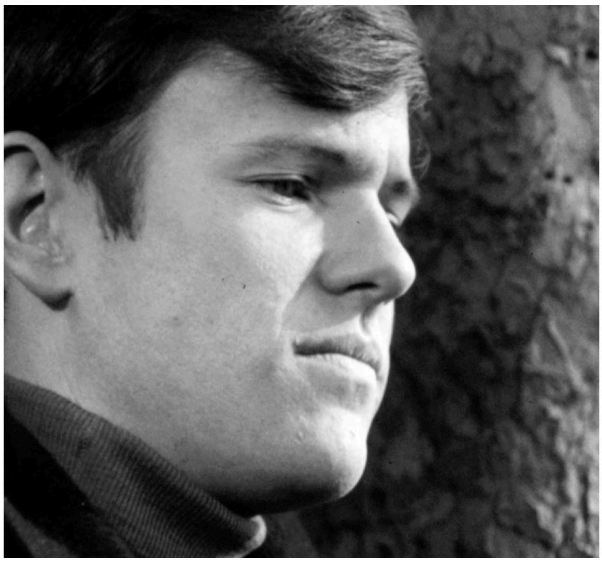
And you walked around this narrow office and in the back there was a little stool, and a microphone and a reel-to-reel tape recorder. He says, 'Why don't you sit on this stool and sing your songs?' I said [eagerly] '*Really?*' 'Yeah!' So I did. I still have the tape and you could even hear the typewriter in the background from the secretary lady there," he laughs.



Suzannah Jordan, ca. 1964. (Photo courtesy Sidonie Jordan)

Millman was a jazz trumpeter, but also made a quick buck providing music to various budget labels, including Surrey, a division of Mira, run by Randy Woods (not the same Randy Woods who ran Dot Records) and Betty

Chiapetta. “So here’s what happened,” continues Chris. “He took this tape and he wanted to release it as a record: *Chris Ducey Sings Songs of Protest and Anti-Protest*. So I go to Hal Kant and I tell him what went down: ‘This guy Jack Millman made this tape of me three weeks before I got the audition and he’s sending me all these papers to sign. He says he’s got an album cover already designed and he wants to make the record right away.’ And of course Hal says, ‘Well, you just got this TV pilot part, screw him!’ and squishes him.”



Digital image courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

The cover of *Songs of Protest and Anti-Protest* had already been designed and typeset, and the song titles copyrighted (the photo on the cover was not of Chris Ducey, but of Brian Jones, his face obscured, blowing harp onstage at a Sunset Strip club a few months earlier). Rather than scrapping the project entirely, the label decided to make a simple fix. Chris Ducey’s name was changed to Chris LUCEY on the cover, and another artist was persuaded to come in and write and record a set of songs with the same titles.

The artist in question was Bobby Jameson, who delivered a remarkably strong set of songs, each bearing the same titles as Ducey’s originals. According to Jameson’s account, Wood and Chiapetta were all set to launch Surrey in Europe, a lucrative deal that was contingent on this particular album being delivered posthaste. After recording the songs, Jameson balked

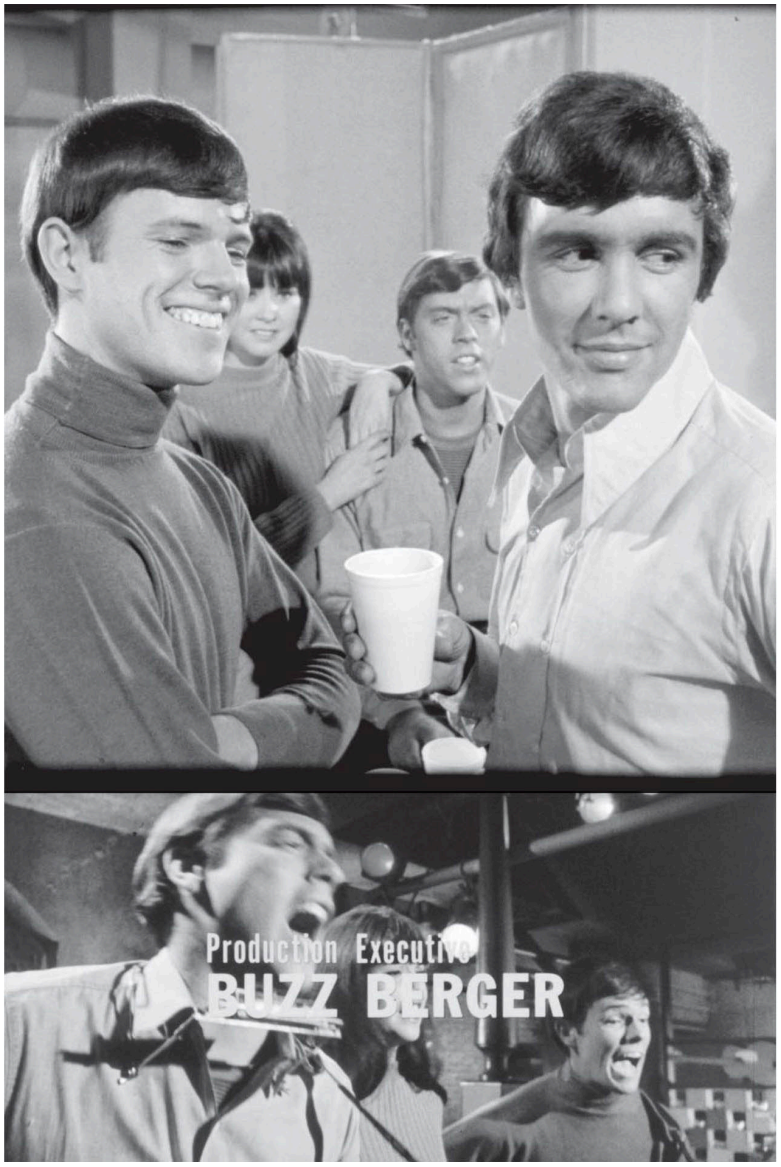
at signing the contract, but, much to his chagrin, Surrey went ahead with the release anyway.

The strange Chris Ducey/Chris Lucey episode was confused still further when an alternate version of the album appeared for sale on Amazon (as a download or CD-R) using the original Chris *Ducey* artwork and purporting to be Ducey's original recordings. They were nothing of the sort, as Ducey himself was able to confirm, but rather a *third* set of songs using his titles and performed by an unidentified group of singers and musicians.

Jameson went on to record more music under his own name, including the great *Color Him In* album, released on Verve in 1967, but his career was plagued by bad management, bad fortune, and bad drugs. In one infamous incident he had to be talked down from the edge of the roof of the Continental Hyatt House on Sunset after threatening to jump. "My family life as a kid was the breeding ground for addicts," Jameson later wrote. "No self-worth, no help, and one chance to get out alive. Music was the horse I rode out on... and the music business was the horse I rode into hell. Pronounced dead twice from drug overdoses, I lived to tell how the pursuit of fame is as deadly as any narcotic I have ever used." Jameson died in 2015, still bitter over the way he'd been chewed up and spat out by the music business. Ironically, his most acclaimed work at the time of his death was the one record that didn't even bear his name, *Songs of Protest and Anti-Protest* by Chris Lucey.

"It's not me," reiterates Chris Ducey. "It's Bobby Jameson. Those are my song titles, but those are other songs written behind my titles by this poor kid who later went on to get fucked by more people like that. So anyway, I start in controversy!"

Digital image courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.



Craig Smith, Suzannah Jordan and Chris Ducey with Dave Clark on *The Happeners*.
Digital images courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

7

THE HAPPENERS

What's that a-comin'
Singin' and strummin'
Ridin' in with the wind?

"Meanwhile…" Chris pauses to exhale a cloud of marijuana smoke. "Craig and I are now *The Happeners*…"

Craig had been cast as Alan Howard: "an intense young man, a Yale dropout, between 18 & 22, his first love is singing and the music that comes from his guitar." Other than attending Yale, the casting notes described Craig to a T.

The other two parts were a little less fleshed-out in the script notes. Chris was to play Colt: "a tall, lean boy, possibly from the Southwestern USA, 18–22 years old. He sings, plays guitar, banjo," while Suzannah was Jane, "a girl somewhere between 18 & 22 whose beauty is only exceeded by her talent."

On November 1st, 1965, they began shooting the pilot episode of *The Happeners* in New York City. The shoot lasted a month, during which time Chris, Craig, and Suzannah were put up in a hotel on Lexington Avenue. They were paid a $75 per diem plus $550 per week. "For a kid of 20 years old, that was pretty hot," says Chris. "I was livin' on Easy Street. It was the first fun stuff I'd ever done."

"One of the things I remember most was we were in the blackout together," remembers Suzannah, referring to the massive power failure that hit New York City on November 9th. "We were like 25 floors up in Craig's hotel room, massively way up high, and he just made it so *fun*. We had to

walk down all the stairs to get to the bottom. It took us ages. And then we went out into the street and it was just fantastic. Everybody was so friendly. All the streetlights were out. The whole city was down. There were restaurants serving meals by candlelight and we went out to eat at a restaurant in the dark. It was just fantastic. What an experience! I think Chris was there too. We were all three of us hanging out in Craig's room. I remember a lot of fun with Chris and Craig. They were super guys, both of them."

On another occasion, Chris and Craig went out on the town with David Greene, the director. "David Greene asked Craig and me if we wanted to join him at the Village Vanguard where Miles Davis was playing publicly for the first time in years," recounts Chris. "Of course we said yes. So, after a day of shooting and dinner we went to the club, which was very dark and atmospheric, a famous jazz venue. About mid-show in that dark under the table David starts his right hand on a little journey up my left inner thigh. Oh, my! I thought, I must cut him off at the pass before he reaches my Johnson... I said something like, 'Oh, David, thanks for the compliment, but I am totally hetero.' He made a polite English apology and we moved right past it. Funny, his daughter who came down from Boston on weekends, wound up involved with me. So I guess you could say one of the Greenes got me to bed with them!"

The pilot episode, titled "You've Gotta Have Charisma, Baby," laid out the show's premise and introduced the main characters. Craig, Chris, and Suzannah are a struggling folk-rock group called the Happeners, managed by a coffeehouse proprietor played by Lou Jacobi. Lou Gossett, Jr. plays a record producer, loosely based on Bob Dylan's producer Tom Wilson, and there's a guest spot by the Dave Clark Five in the recording studio scene. After playing "Having a Wild Weekend," they give the young Happeners some advice about being a successful group and touch upon the vague concept of charisma. *The Monkees* TV pilot was being filmed back in L.A. at the same time, but *The Happeners*, despite the musical group theme, was a very different kind of a show. "We were three runaways," explains Chris. "Literally—living in the city in sleeping bags in apartment buildings that were under construction. There's one scene in the pilot where we have a candle on a wire spool and we've got our sleeping bags out in this concrete room and we have this lullaby that we sing. So we're living on the street. It

was like a *Hard Day's Night* kind of thing, but whereas *The Monkees* on the West Coast was being shot like they'd already made it—they're living in the [Hollywood] Hills, they have the car and the outfits and this crazy life—we didn't have that life. We were kids *trying* to make it. It was gritty."

Craig likely tapped into his personal experience for one memorable scene between Alan and his father. "At the time there was 'the generation gap'," says Chris, "and Craig played a very troubled character with a father problem. His father was a rich guy who lived up on Park Avenue and there was one scene where we went up to his mansion and had a little *tête à tête*, and Craig and his dad got into it kinda. So it was dramatic too; it wasn't a comedy per se. It was entertainment but also edgy. It was very revolutionary."

Craig's previous acting experience on *The Andy Williams Show* served him well. On screen his performance is convincingly natural. "Craig was the more experienced actor among us," remembers Suzannah. "He was very gracious for his age. It almost seemed like he was old for his age, if you know what I mean."

Although neither Chris nor Suzannah had any real acting experience, this added to the feeling of authenticity the producers were looking for. There was very little coaching or rehearsal. "I was more of a light character," says Chris. "I played Colt, a character who drifted in from Oklahoma as a big, tall, gangly guitar player. Craig was more intellectual, from New York; his dad lived on Park Avenue. And then Suzannah was just a sweet girl who sang well."

Suzannah got to carve out her character a bit more in the aforementioned lullaby scene, where she describes her grandmother tucking all the kids up into one bed and telling "soothing stories of the potato famine and the coffin ships landing in Boston Harbor." This scene is one of the most effective in the pilot, each of the three runaways reminiscing about their childhood and singing—beautifully—a different lullaby, then weaving all three songs together to really tug on the emotional heart strings. It may sound banal, but it's accomplished masterfully.

As the youngest and least experienced of the three, Suzannah admits she had some difficulties with the shoot. "I had some problem waking up in the morning so I got into trouble," she confesses. "I was 17 years old. It was like getting up for school, only worse because you had to get up at like 6

o'clock in the morning. I remember having trouble there and then getting on to my mother and her buying me an alarm clock. So I was a bit naughty. Being so young, I didn't really appreciate it all, what was happening at the time.

"I remember we were doing a scene in the limousine," she continues. "This is burned into my brain—where I'm talking to Craig and saying, 'You brought us here to put salt in the sugar bowl, as an act of rebellion against your parents.' I remember having trouble with that scene and David Greene said to me, 'You know, you'd be a good actress if you got some *training*!'" She laughs. "Acting was something I always had a hard time with. I did acting throughout my career because it was a way you made money, but I'm telling you, acting I found very hard. With singing you can be yourself. Basically you're playing yourself. You might be playing yourself in different situations emotionally, but you are playing yourself. But with acting you actually get in the skin of someone else, and I always found that hard. I got headaches when I tried to act. Craig was a natural, but I don't know how Chris and I did."

Some of the scenes were shot cinema verité-style in Washington Square Park and Central Park and on the streets of Manhattan. While shooting part of the title sequence in Central Park, Craig aggravated an old knee injury from his gymnastics days. He was on crutches for a short time, and they had to shoot around him. "We shot it on 35mm color," remembers Buzz Berger. "At that time we were kind of new to color; we had just done one season of our shows in color. Television, except for NBC, was all black-and-white up until 1964."

The hour-long show featured several musical numbers, including the group's theme song ("*Be a part of all that happens / Come on, we'll take you there / 'Cause we're the Happeners!*"), a melodic folk ballad (possibly titled "If I Only Knew" or "Wrong or Right"), the folk lullaby "All the Pretty Little Horses," and a raucous garage rocker "You Gotta Let Me Go" (a song that resurfaced a few years later in one of Greene's films, *Sebastian*). Ducey remembers recording some of these tracks at a studio in New York City with members of the Jim Kweskin Jug Band helping out. "We did some of it in playback where we went in and pre-recorded," confirms Berger, "but we did some of it live on the set. I have a memory of 'All the Pretty Little Horses' being sung live on the set."

"You Gotta Let Me Go" is performed over the closing credits, by which time the trio had become a quartet with the addition of coffeehouse dishwasher turned bass player Gerard. "The kid with the bass fiddle was the last one we cast," recalls Berger. "He was almost an afterthought. Ernie Kinoy kind of wrote him in. He was from the New York pool and we liked him so much but we had already cast the three leads—so then we decided we would make it *four* leads." The actor on bass was Gerard Kenny, who would later become a moderately popular singer-songwriter in the UK where his song "New York, New York" made the Top 50 in 1978. "The second [*Happeners*] show was to be centered around me," Gerard told me via email. "I had run away from my aunt and uncle's house (my parents had been killed in a car crash) and my grandmother shows up at the Bitter End to take care of me."

When shooting for the pilot wrapped at the end of 1965, Brodkin, Berger, and everyone else involved in the production was convinced they had a hit show on their hands. A screening was arranged so ABC network president Tom Moore could see their work and give his approval. "We screened it outside of ABC at a screening room of our choice," remembers Berger. "Usually Herb wanted to do it outside of the network because if you were in a network screening room and an important call came in for Tom Moore in the middle of a show—or Leonard Goldenson, one of the founders of ABC—he would take the call, and that would piss Herb off unbelievably. It drove Herb *nuts*! Just like having censors present, guys from Broadcast Standards and Practices, drove him completely crazy, too. He wouldn't allow them in the room. And God help them if somebody was in the room with one of those clipboards with the little light on it and they would start taking notes and turn on the light on the clipboard. Herb would stop the screening and throw them out, physically if necessary! I remember on more than one occasion going into one of these screenings and the network guys, whoever it was, whether it was Tom Moore or Paul Klein or somebody else, would say to the receptionist, 'I've got an important call coming in. No matter when it comes in, ring me inside the projection room.' And they would go in and sit down and Herb would give me an elbow, and whisper, 'Go out there and tell them no calls under any circumstances or I'll kill them!' And there would be no calls. Herb was an extraordinary character. Mostly everybody was terrified of him."

All was calm in the darkened projection room as film rolled. “We were there I think with Ernie Kinoy,” remembers Berger, “and when the lights came on, we *fully* expected that they would say, ‘Holy shit! This is *great*!’ Because it was a terrific little show and they had nothing like it. But I remember the lights came back up and Tom Moore stood up and said: ‘Well, Herb. Golly, wow. I’ll be damned. I don’t know what to *make* of that. It’s not a drama, it’s not *Hullabaloo*. What do you *call* this, Herb?’”

Brodkin—“a six-foot-two- or three-inch, hook-nosed, redheaded guy who got angry very easily,” remarks Buzz—rose from his seat, faced Moore and replied witheringly, “I call it an *entertainment*, Tom.”

“He was probably a little red in the face when he said it too,” adds Berger. “And Tom replied, ‘Oh, yeah! That’s good! An *entertainment*, yeah.’ And he left.”

Although Moore wasn’t convinced that *The Happeners* was a hit, Leonard Goldenson, the top dog at ABC, loved it, going so far as to call it “the finest pilot I’ve ever seen.” It was penciled in for ABC’s prime time lineup for the fall of 1966 in the Friday night 10 p.m. slot. ABC was committed to buying at least one show from Plautus, and Brodkin and Berger still felt sure that they would choose *The Happeners* over *One-Eyed Jacks Are Wild*.

As it turned out, ABC didn’t want to buy either of them. “They called us back and they said, ‘We don’t want either pilot, but we’ve got a must-buy situation so you’ve gotta give us something,’” remembers Berger. That something turned out to be a western starring David Carradine called *Shane*. “Herb had sold Plautus to Paramount and he became the largest single stockholder at Paramount Pictures so that’s how we got the *Shane* project,” explains Berger, “and that’s what ABC took instead of one of the two pilots. Of course *Shane* went on for one season and then got canceled. It was David Carradine—God help me, he took ten years off my life. He later went on and had a successful career with *Kung Fu.*”

Suzannah Jordan was shocked when she got the news that *The Happeners* had been canceled. “It was actually scheduled to air,” she laments. “It was all ready to go. We went back to L.A. and I don’t remember how we found out that it had actually been dropped. But there was a big changeover at ABC and the people that had been behind the pilot had left and they dropped the project. It was a surprise. They called it ‘too

good for TV' at the time. It was kind of shocking that it got dropped. It was such a shame because I think it would've been a wonderful series."

Critics who saw the pilot in ABC's screening rooms agreed, but the show didn't test well with Nielsen audiences, and was apparently too edgy to attract advertisers. In an article in *Variety* magazine, Jack Pitman wrote: "The fate of 'Happeners' in particular ought to be convincing evidence to producers and creators that unless a pilot is shaped strictly with the Nielsen tribe in mind, it's the wrong league to play in. Brodkin's pilot has been running for weeks in one of ABC's spanking new (and overcooled) screening rooms, which is definitely the wrong booking for an art film. Not in any of video's big years of sausage production has anything so hip and so contemporary reached the network audience circuit."

The article went on to call *The Happeners* "fun, fast and charming" and "fit for the big screen," comparing it to Richard Lester's Beatles movies. "The kids in the cast are Suzannah Jordan, Craig Smith and Chris Ducey, who are—for a change—genuinely fresh and genuinely a delight."

"ABC reportedly sank some $400,000 into this Plautus Production," it concluded, "and bought itself the unseen hit of the year."

Buzz Berger, who continued to enjoy a stellar career as a television producer (his credits include the Emmy award-winning TV miniseries *Holocaust* starring Meryl Streep) remains convinced that *The Happeners* would have been a big success. "ABC was stupid," he says bluntly. "It was Tom Moore. He was just a complete moron. Herb Brodkin used to say that if a network could fuck something up they would, which was Herb's rule. It was so stupid because they didn't realize that the music would've become instantaneously box office, the way it did for the Monkees. There's no question in my mind that those kids would've had records out and record deals and it would've all been bouncing back and forth and made everybody very rich. It was very unique for television. Something like that just didn't exist on television."

Although he made light of it later, the show's cancellation must have come as a big disappointment for Craig Smith. Having already tasted prime-time TV success on *The Andy Williams Show, The Happeners* was his chance to vault several more rungs up the show business career ladder with a starring role that showcased his talents not only as a singer and musician, but as an actor. He would never come that close again. But according to

Chris, “Me and Craig pretty much took it in stride and decided it was a great break. Let’s just keep singing and writing as Chris and Craig.”

After spending time together working on *The Happeners*, Ducey and Smith had found they connected musically. “That’s when I first heard that song I liked so much of his, ‘I’m Walking Solo,’” recalls Chris, “which I thought was a fabulous song and drew me to him as a musician. I said, ‘Wow, if he can write this, just think of what else he can write. I really *like* this!’” The song was a quirky, finger-picked acoustic song with some unusual jazz-influenced chord choices and tempo shifts. It would later appear on Craig’s *Apache* LP.

Eventually *The Happeners* pilot did air, just one time, on March 17th, 1967 on WPIX New York. *The Daily News* wrote: “Three clean-cut young performers—Suzannah Jordan, Chris Ducey and Craig Smith—hit the mark with their music, acting and verve in *The Happeners*, a special with a lively beat, on WPIX-TV last night… It was better, even without doctoring, than most products which premiered last September.”

By that time though, Craig Smith and Chris Ducey had headed out together toward the reef.

8

CHRIS & CRAIG

"So then Craig and I were what I like to call the Ex-Happeners," laughs Chris. "Or the Mishappeners…"

Although their promising career as television stars had been put on ice, Chris and Craig had bonded musically. Back in Los Angeles they moved into an apartment together and began working up material on acoustic guitars and honing their harmonies. "Basically the writing was mostly separate," says Chris. "We'd put vocal things together on each other's songs but not musical things."

Many of the songs they would later record together in the Penny Arkade were written during this gestation period, including Craig's "Country Girl" and "Voodoo Spell." At this stage Smith was the more prolific of the two songwriters, but egged on by his partner, Ducey soon began coming up with some jewels of his own.

Billing themselves as Chris & Craig, in early 1966 they began playing around some of the clubs in Hollywood as an acoustic duo. "We were like Peter & Gordon with a more modern touch," reckons Chris. "We also had a good sense of humor onstage and we could play off each other's humor. We were kind of light in that way and could bounce around." Craig had a comedic persona he'd created called Froggie—an extension of his 'Lizard Face' shtick of a few years earlier. A cartoon drawing of Froggie appeared on the *Inca* album cover with a halo and a joint, suggesting that Craig's self-deprecating sense of humor was intact even then.

According to Chris though, Craig's upbeat, outgoing personality was a façade, constructed to hide some deeply troubling issues in his private life. "He had alcoholic parents," says Chris, "and they caused him deep angst,

although he masked it with a joking, light persona. He was deeply embarrassed with his mom, I think. She was like a has-been actress or singer who aged with a bottle in her hand while trying to hold on to her youthful 'beauty' with cheap makeup and perfume. She would fawn over him whenever we went over there, but Craig seemed rather dismissive with her. Something went on between them when he grew up, I felt."

Certainly there was some tension in Craig's family life, and this would later manifest itself in a more dramatic fashion. In the meantime, though, music consumed most of his waking moments.

Craig had amassed some useful music industry connections in the two years he'd spent with the Good Time Singers, and that's likely how Chris & Craig landed a management deal with Sal Bonafede and Asher Dann—or Sal and Ash, as they were known in the business. Bonafede was a tough-nosed Italian-American who'd managed Dion & the Belmonts among others, while Dann was Hollywood-slick, a former movie actor, well-connected and with acres of charm. "Dapper Dann, I called him," says Chris, "very polished and smooth, a handsome dude. He must have had a million ladies in his day." When I spoke to Dann in January 2015 he didn't remember much about Chris & Craig: "I'm an *old* fuck!" he jokes. "I'm 80. I'm lucky to remember my name." He thinks, though, that it may have been Andy Williams who told him to check them out. "Andy was a friend of mine. I used to play golf with him." As for Ducey and Smith: "They were nice kids, both of them, and I tried to help them. I thought they were good."

Their new managers arranged a deal with Capitol Records—who would already have known of Craig from his Good Time Singers days. There were a number of recording sessions during the summer and early autumn of 1966 as they tried out various songs with producer Steve Douglas. Capitol session logs show that Smith's "I Need You" and "Love Has Come Today" and Ducey's "I Can't Go On" were tracked at Western Recorders on June 30th and July 1st with Bones Howe as the engineer. Of these, "I Need You" was deemed to be the strongest track and earmarked for an upcoming single. "I Can't Go On" was released in 2013 on the compilation CD *Book A Trip 2*, while the bright, upbeat "Love Has Come Today" survives on a studio acetate.

Meanwhile Ducey had come up with an outstanding, Eastern-flavored number called "Isha," which had undeniable hit potential. It would become

the A-side of Chris & Craig's debut single—the exact release date of which is subject to speculation. Capitol's catalog number places the record's release in July 1966, but session contracts filed with the musician's union indicate it was recorded over two sessions in September. More puzzle pieces that don't fit.

The September 3rd session at Capitol's Vine Street studio—two blocks from where Craig had lived as an infant—utilized the talents of arranger Perry Botkin, Jr., who brought in an array of Wrecking Crew heavyweights, including drummer Hal Blaine, bass players Larry Knechtel and Ray Pohlman, and three guitar players: Glen Campbell, Al Casey and Mike Deasy. Casey also played violin and xylophone on the session, while Campbell shook a tambourine. Two weeks later, on September 21st, more work was done on "Isha," along with two songs co-written by Ducey and Smith, "Blues #1" and "Ugly Street" (the titles suggest they may have been works in progress). On the union contract, Mike Deasy is listed as band leader and Craig as arranger. The musicians again included Deasy, Campbell, Casey, Knechtel, and Botkin, Jr., along with drummer Jim Gordon, who Craig knew from his Grant High School days, and Lyle Ritz, whose specialty was jazz ukulele, but was also known to play upright bass. Although he's not listed on the contracts, Chris Ducey also remembers Milt Holland playing percussion on one of the sessions.

The resultant master for "Isha" was truly impressive, a full, vibrant production, alight with swirling, exotic flourishes and topped by Ducey and

Smith's soaring harmonies. With its hooky melody and *au courant* raga rock flavor, "Isha" undoubtedly had commercial appeal, but with relatively little promotion the radio stations didn't bite and the single sold relatively poorly. "They threw it against the wall, it didn't stick and they moved on," shrugs Chris. Nevertheless, Capitol saw fit to issue it in other territories, including Germany and New Zealand.

Prior to the single's release, Chris and Craig headed down to Mexico with some friends for the 4th of July weekend. One of Craig's friends who came along on the trip was Dan Canepa. After they returned to the States, Chris began dating Canepa's younger sister, Nancy. "Craig already knew Nance as they all went to Grant High School together," explains Chris. "After that 4th of July trip I went over to get Dan for something we were going to do and Nancy answered the door—love at first sight, I guess! I bumped into her shortly thereafter at a club in the Valley called Pier 7. Though she was only 18 or 19, clubs in those days could let girls in under age but guys had to be 21 at the door. We hit it off big-time there and never parted." Chris and Nancy married on April 15th, 1967, and were together until she passed in 2010. "So thank you, Craig, wherever you are, for the Nancy connection!" says Chris, raising his wine glass.

Throughout the second half of 1966 and into early 1967, Chris & Craig continued writing songs and playing occasional live gigs around Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. Craig later told a *Tiger Beat* writer that they performed under the name Old Man Time & His Mickey Mouse Watch. He was joking, but Chris does remember two similar characters they invented for Halloween in 1966: Ducor, Duke of Destiny (Chris) and Rondock, Keeper of the Magic Clock (Craig). "Our costumes were cheap black Lone Ranger masks, capes fashioned from an old torn-up sheet and little cheap sparkler toys—the kind that looked like little wheels that you held between your fingers with a little spring-loaded stem that you would push up with your thumb to spin the disc and spit out small sparks," explains Chris. "We dressed for our Halloween date with two Latvian girls Craig knew at the time. We appeared at their door with bold announcements of our characters in our deepest voices, sparking away. Just silly fun." Craig's Rondock character may have been a spin-off of a song he was formulating at the time, "Hands of the Clock."

November 1966 saw Ducor & Rondock—as Chris & Craig—performing "Isha" at a big concert at UCLA headlined by the Mothers of Invention. The duo was the opening act on a bill that also included Canned Heat and the Factory. For the occasion, Chris & Craig expanded to a full band lineup, both playing electric guitars, backed by Craig's friend Richie Hayward of the Factory on drums, and most likely the Factory's Martin Kibbee on bass. "That was our breakthrough event that started getting us wings," remembers Ducey. "At the end Zappa got everybody back up onstage to do a 15- or 20-minute boogie with all the bands playing simultaneously and Frank conducting. It was in the middle of the hall up on a big 15-foot podium. It was fabulous, absolutely fabulous. That was a big moment—in *my* life anyway!"

Despite the undeserved commercial failure of "Isha," Capitol evidently still held an interest in the duo as they continued to pay for more sessions. On November 7th Chris & Craig recorded an exceptionally catchy new song by Craig called "She Brought Me Something Beautiful," and in December two more songs were tracked at Capitol with Steve Douglas producing, Chris' "Cymbals and Bells" and Craig's "Hold Me Love Me." In January 1967 Nick Venet took over as producer and two more songs were recorded, "Century of Distance" (written by Craig) and "Wings." It's possible that the latter was a cover version of Tim Buckley's song. Venet produced a version by the Stone Poneys during this same time period, and Craig makes an oblique reference to Buckley's "Wings" in the liner notes of *Apache/Inca*. Mono masters were completed for all of these tracks, but they have never been released.

It was in late 1966 or early 1967 that Craig first began spending time with Jason Laskay, a young actor who'd recently relocated to Los Angeles from Miami. "We became instant friends," remembers Laskay. "Craig was just a really easy guy to get along with."

Although he has remained active in the entertainment industry as an actor and a screenwriter, Laskay has next to no online presence and it takes me several years to track him down. We eventually connect in early 2015, and arrange to meet for a lunchtime interview at a café in Bel-Air. He turns out to be loquacious and friendly, and our conversations continue by phone in the months that follow.

Jason Laskay, Christmas 1966. (Photo courtesy Jason Laskay)

Laskay was originally from Winnetka, Illinois, an affluent lakeshore village north of Chicago. As a teenager he'd dabbled in music, including playing drums in a high school band with future blues guitar legend Mike Bloomfield, before realizing that acting was his true calling. After graduating high school Laskay relocated to Florida where he attended the University of Miami and began landing acting parts in television commercials. His first movie role came in 1966 when he was cast in *Birds Do It*, a lightweight comedy starring Soupy Sales and Tab Hunter. He also appeared on TV's *Flipper* in a recurring role as student scientist Lloyd Desco. While working as an extra on *The Jackie Gleason Show*, which filmed in Miami Beach, he met Heather MacRae. Heather had been attending school in Colorado, but was paying an extended visit to her mother, who had separated from husband Gordon and was now living in Golden Beach and playing the role of Alice Kramden on the Gleason show. Jason and Heather hit it off romantically, their relationship providing fodder for the Miami gossip columns: "Newest twosome around town: Gordon and Sheila MacRae's daughter, Heather, and actor Jay Laskay," chirped the *Miami News* on September 9th, 1966. "Spotted listening to Tubby Boots at Place Pigalle for the third time."

As Laskay's acting career began to take off, his agent suggested that he move out to L.A. where movie and TV work was more plentiful. Generously, the MacRaes not only helped him out with some contacts, but also offered him the use of their large home in Studio City. It was there that Heather first introduced him to many of her friends, including neighbors Edie and Richie Baskin, whose father had co-founded the Baskin-Robbins ice cream franchise, Chuck Shyer, and Craig Smith. Richie—or Richard—Baskin would later become a film composer and movie producer, Edie an acclaimed photographer and art director, and Shyer a successful screenwriter, director, and producer.

But it was Craig with whom Jason would form the closest friendship. "Craig and I became the kind of friends that every day we'd talk on the phone: 'Where are we gonna go tonight? What are we gonna do?'" recounts Laskay. "At the time, except for once in a while, neither one of us had girlfriends to speak of. I was with Heather, but Heather was away at school. It was a time for discovery and running around. The Sunset Strip was going on and all that kind of craziness."

In the mid-'60s, the Sunset Strip was the epicenter for live music in Los Angeles, and every night the streets were swarming with young people who poured in from all over the city to make the scene. Smith and Laskay headed to the Strip almost every night, either in Jason's Jaguar drop-head coupe—he'd traded in his GTO—or Craig's green Volkswagen Beetle (he'd apparently traded in his Porsche). There they would hit the hot spots like the Whisky, Ciro's, the Sea Witch, and Pandora's Box, taking in bands like the Byrds and Buffalo Springfield—both of which made a huge impression on Craig and his songwriting.

"The Strip was really cool then," remembers Laskay. "Craig and I used to go down there every night. That was where we lived, on the Strip. We used to go to Pandora's Box and see all kinds of bands—even Dick & Dee Dee were there; I loved their records. We saw the Byrds, the Buffalo Springfield—and we knew all those people. In that time all of us were coming up. Neil Young had a real cool '40s Lincoln Continental, and I had my Jag. We used to all go to Ben Frank's on Sunset and we'd hang out with him there a lot. We knew Neil and the rest of the Buffalo Springfield from clubs and hanging around. We used to play and sing with Richie Furay and

those guys at their place in Laurel Canyon." Craig later name-checked Neil Young prominently on the *Inca* album cover.

Another band they socialized with was the Beach Boys. Craig's high school friend Suzanne Belcher was now married to Mike Love, and he and Craig soon became friends. "We used to go to Mike Love's house all the time," recounts Jason, "especially when the Beach Boys were out on the road, and hang out with Suzanne and a girl named Teri, who was Bruce Johnston's girlfriend. The four of us used to go out—nothing ever involved dating, they were just like two guys to us. We used to get stoned and drive around. Mike used to call me 'Birdman,' and that became my nickname. People called me Jay back then, which I didn't like for some reason, and I really didn't like Birdman or Jaybird. Maybe Craig laid that on me, too."

While a lot this activity appeared, on the surface, to be stoned fun and games, Craig was actively networking with people in the music industry, pushing Chris & Craig, or trying to place his songs with other artists. "Craig got invited to a lot of music industry events," remembers Jason. "He had a good in-road with a lot of people in the music business—managers and label people and things like that. Craig was very gregarious in that way and was not afraid to go up and introduce himself and do all that. I was still a little introverted about things like that, but he was very, very outgoing. He was extremely self-confident about his talents—not to the point of being arrogant, just to the point of not caring what anybody thought. If they didn't like it, it was no big deal to him: 'That's cool.' He would network, too. That was one of the good things about him was that he wasn't afraid to tell people what he was doing. He wasn't afraid to pick up the phone and call and do things himself if he couldn't get his managers or whoever to do it for him."

Even though Craig was aware that the Beach Boys were equipped with a perfectly capable in-house songwriting genius in the shape of Brian Wilson, he had no qualms in pitching his own songs to Mike Love. "Craig was always trying to get a song placed with them," remembers Jason. "He would play stuff for Mike whenever Mike was home. They might have even tried to do one of Craig's songs, I just don't remember for sure. But Mike knew Craig as a songwriter."

Love may have just been humoring Craig by listening to his songs, but by most accounts the two of them shared a genuine friendship that lasted for

several years. Over the next few years Smith and Laskay added some of the other Beach Boys to their circle of acquaintances. Dennis Wilson's house would become a regular hangout, and they would also drop in to visit Brian Wilson on occasion. "Craig and I went to his house in Bel-Air, when it was the purple mansion with the sand on the floor and all that," remembers Laskay, "but Brian was pretty unavailable. Carl Wilson became a really good friend of mine later. We were into some of the same spiritual things together. I knew him up to when he died. Carl was a great guy."

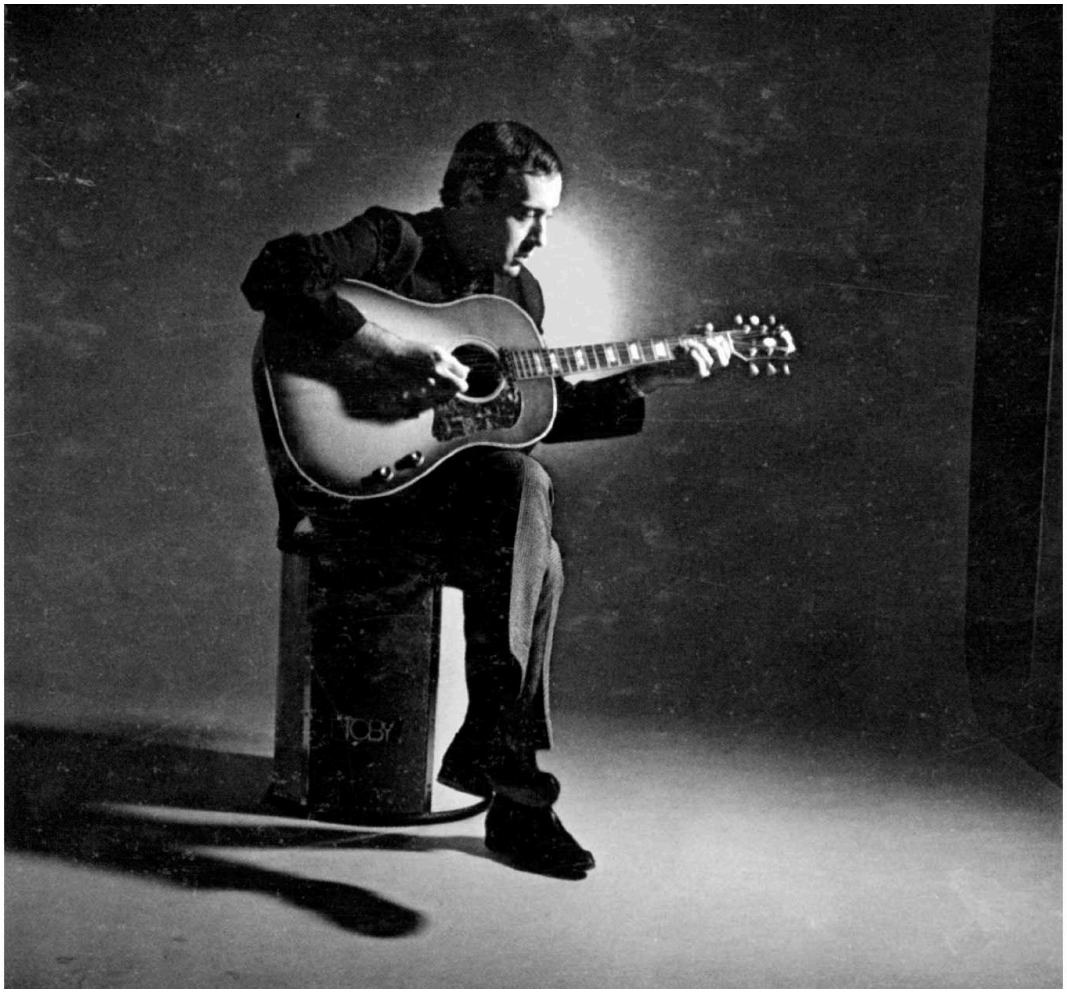
Another acquaintance of Craig's during this period was the Hungarian-born jazz guitarist, Gabor Szabo. Szabo had fled his native country for the States in 1956, and after attending the Berklee College of Music had gone on to join the Chico Hamilton Quintet. By the time he met Craig, Gabor had embarked on a solo career, recording a series of albums for the Impulse! label that blended his gypsy jazz style with modern pop and rock influences. Along with Gary McFarland, Szabo was one of the first serious jazz musicians to embrace the new rock music, recording innovative arrangements of songs by writers like Lennon-McCartney, Donovan, Jagger-Richard, and John Phillips, and developing a technique of rich sustain and controlled feedback that would in turn influence rock musicians such as Carlos Santana and Steve Howe. On his 1967 album *Wind, Sky and Diamonds*, Gabor collaborated with a nine-piece harmony vocal ensemble, the California Dreamers, a combination that would have been especially appealing to Craig. In fact two of the singers, Tom and John Bahler, had briefly been Good Time Singers (replacing Smith and Michael Storm), and had since teamed up with Marilyn Miller to form a new harmony group called the Love Generation. Jim Gordon was the drummer on that album, and others by Szabo.

Somewhere along the way Craig and Gabor became friends. Laskay remembers he and Craig went out to dinner with Gabor and his wife Alicia after a show at Shelly's Manne Hole. On another occasion they attended a Szabo recording session. Craig would continue to cite Gabor as an influence; his name crops up several times among the cryptic notations on the *Inca* and *Apache* albums.

Craig's focus during this period was music and songwriting. Any aspirations he might have once had to pursue a career in acting were behind him. When the subject of *The Happeners* came up in a conversation with

Laskay, he dismissed the experience out of hand. “He said it was horrible,” remembers Jason. “He said he was not an actor. He didn’t like the experience, I guess. He was at a place where everything he had done before —the TV pilot, the Andy Williams show—was like ‘ah!’” he waves his hand dismissively, “*trash*, you know. He didn’t like it.”

This may have been one of the reasons Smith and Laskay were so comfortable around one another: there was no sense of competition. Jason, though he also did some singing and songwriting, was more fully committed to a career in acting, while Craig was completely wrapped up in his music. Craig encouraged Jason’s musical endeavors, and the two of them would sometimes sing together at parties. Smith later helped Laskay record some demos, including a song written by Michael Martin Murphey called “(I Prithee) Do Not Ask For Love,” which the Monkees also recorded on several occasions but never released.



Jazz guitarist Gabor Szabo.

In 1967 Laskay was cast in *The Graduate* in the role of a college student. Although most of his scene ultimately wound up on the cutting room floor, the shoot in San Francisco lasted a couple weeks. One of the passengers in the car he rode up in was an unassuming young man who introduced himself as Dusty. It wasn't until later that day that he realized it was the movie's lead actor, Dustin Hoffman.

As his acting career gained traction, Laskay moved out of the MacRaes' house and into a large two-story stilt house on Lookout Mountain. Craig would crash there sometimes. After Chris Ducey got married, he and Craig no longer lived together, so Craig had returned to his parents' house, just a short distance down the hill from Laskay's place. Like Chris, Laskay observed that Craig had an uneasy relationship with his parents, especially his mother. He rarely mentioned them, but when he did it was with disdain. "It seemed like mostly it was his mother that he was angry about," recalls Laskay. "But he talked about his dad sometimes, too. It was funny, we'd be driving or something and then he would start talking about his mom and how shitty she was. It would just come out of nowhere, and then he would offer up some story and be off of it. Maybe they discouraged his creativity or something like that."

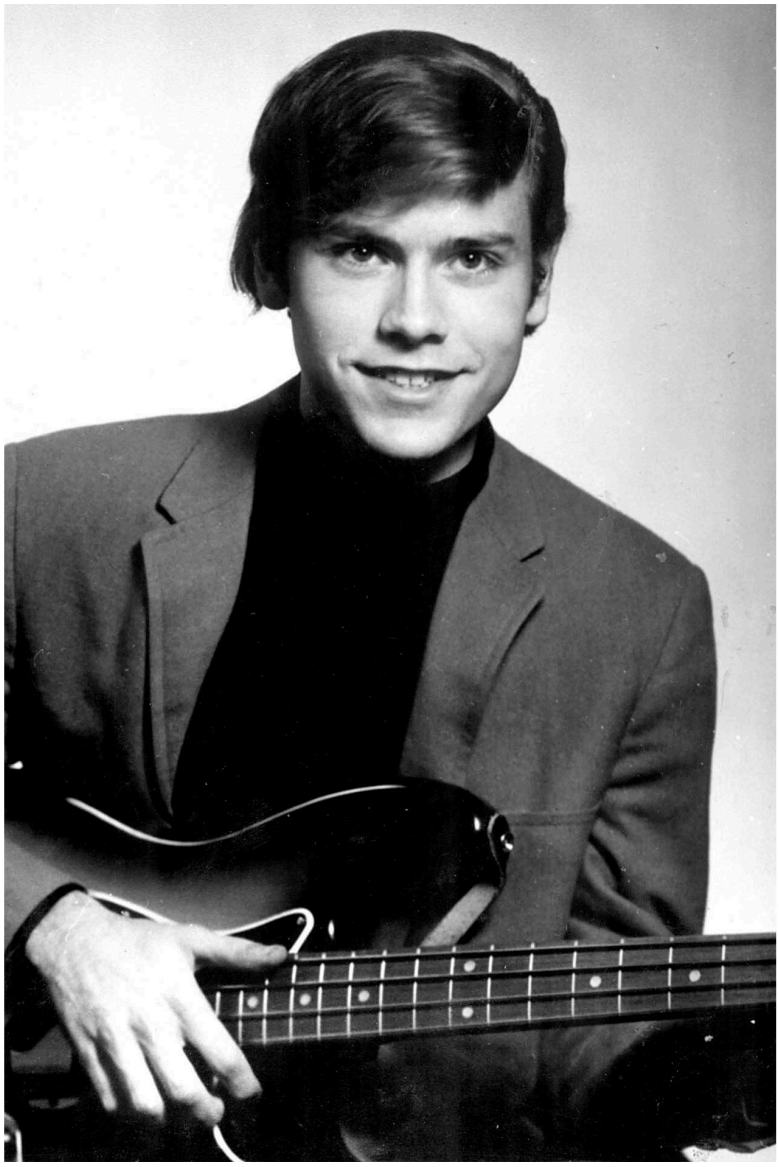
Jason only visited Craig's house on one or two occasions, but usually opted to wait in the car while Craig ran inside to get something he needed. On the one occasion he does remember going inside, Craig's parents seemed perfectly normal, and the only tension in the room seemed to be emanating from Craig himself. "I was on guard," recounts Jason, "because I didn't know what Craig was going to do or what was going on. But everything was fine. His mom said hi to me. No big deal. Craig looked like he would rip her head off if she embarrassed him—but you know how people get with their parents when they have their own thing going on."

"There was nothing out of the ordinary about them," he adds. "The only thing I remember is that they were Craig's parents and they were a little more normal than he was. But all of our parents were normal in terms of what we were doing."

While it would be easy to attribute the family divide to something as simple as "the generation gap," there were undoubtedly much deeper and

more complex issues involved. Laskay remembers that the subject of money often came up when Craig complained about his parents. It's only speculation, but perhaps Chuck Smith's bartending job wasn't bringing in enough to cover the family's bills so Craig had to help them out financially. Although Craig no longer had any income from the Good Time Singers, presumably he had stashed some of that money away, and he would also be receiving royalties from "Christmas Holiday." "I remember him talking about having to give money to his parents," confirms Laskay. "He would bitch about that. It just seemed to be one of those themes. He would say that he didn't have any money because he was having to give it to his mom."

Craig's money problems would soon be behind him, but they would return in the future with devastating results.



Don Glut, 1966. (Photo courtesy Don Glut)

9

MARVEL

By the beginning of 1967, Smith and Ducey were starting to put together a permanent backing group. They were already rehearsing with a drummer and a lead guitar player when Don Glut came to audition as a bass player in response to a notice on the Musicians' Union bulletin board.

"Chris and Craig made a tremendous impression on me," Glut remembers, "because they were doing all original material and it was *all… really… GOOD!* One of the things that impressed me about the Beatles when they first came out was the unusual chord progressions they did that I'd never heard before, not the two or three typical progressions usually heard in rock music. And Chris and Craig were doing the same kind of thing. I mean, they didn't sound like the Beatles, but they were doing all these unusual chord progressions and rhythms, and the lyrics were all different. I said to myself, '*These guys are really gonna make it.*' They sang well together. Craig had a very mellow voice. Chris has a more of a nasal kind of sound and a rougher edge to it that Craig didn't have. Together they blended perfectly. So I said, 'I really wanna be a part of this, because I think these guys are really gonna go.'"

Don Glut (pronounced "Gloot") was born in Pecos, Texas and raised in Chicago before moving out to L.A. in 1964 to study filmmaking at the University of Southern California. Today he's a successful writer, director, filmmaker, voiceover actor and amateur paleontologist.

"The moviemaking started when I was nine years old," he explains. "I didn't really want to make movies at that point, but we had a 16mm camera in the family and a projector and a screen. I loved monster movies, dinosaur movies, and Frankenstein movies. At first I really didn't want to *make* these

films, I wanted to *show* them on our projector any time I wanted, and in those days you couldn't buy movies. The only movies that were available were things like cartoons, Hopalong Cassidy westerns and newsreels. The horror and the science fiction stuff you couldn't get, so I decided to make them myself so I could show them on my home screen. The first was a dinosaur movie I made in 1953 called *Diplodocus At Large*. The special effects consisted of a homemade 'Ollie the Dragon' hand puppet, which I manipulated to attack a little model railway town. Then I kept making movies as I became a teenager."

Along with horror and science fiction movies, Don's other passion was rock & roll. "Music has always been a part of my life and a part of my family," he says. "I played in the school band in grammar school and high school and I learned the guitar through one of my uncles. He showed me a few chords so I could play new songs and I just picked up the rest on my own. I've always been able to do that, and so I've actually played in bands ever since I was a really young teenager.

"The other side of the block where I lived in Chicago was where all the hoodlum gangs hung out. There was the nice side where I lived, and next to it was the 'other side of the tracks.' One of the guys there who I went to grammar school with, who was in this gang, played the drums, and we started playing together. That's how I got in with the kids on the other side of the block. To this day they're some of the best friends I ever had.

"So anyway, because I could play the guitar and because he could play the drums, they sort of brought me into their gang. At that time, in the late '50s, I had been making all these Frankenstein, Dracula and Wolf Man movies in my backyard and the alley and the basement. We were basically kids playing the parts of adults with makeup and fake sideburns and Frankenstein masks and everything. Well, around this time Hollywood started making teenager monster movies: *I Was a Teenage Werewolf, I Was a Teenage Frankenstein…* And I said, 'Hey, we can make movies and we can actually be the right age of the characters we're playing.' So I started getting these guys I was hangin' out with to be my characters. We all had the leather motorcycle jackets and all that, and we started making this whole series of teenage monster films, and they were all my actors. So these things—the music and the movies—were all kind of related."

In 1964, Glut left Chicago and began attending film school at USC. "That was the year that an awful lot of creative people came out of USC," he recalls, "and a lot of them stuck together and helped each other out." George Lucas was one of Don's friends and classmates (years later Don would write the novelized version of *The Empire Strikes Back*), John Milius (director of *Conan the Barbarian* and *Red Dawn*) was another buddy, as were Hollywood film composer Basil Poledouris, and Randal Kleiser (director of *Grease* and *The Blue Lagoon*). Kleiser also played one of the leads in Don's *Captain America vs. The Mutant*, filmed in L.A. that year.

While at school, Glut's musical activities continued unabated. "I had more opportunities out here," he explains, "because the people that I met musically were not just guys playing in the garage or in the basement, these were people who were serious about it and had connections."

He teamed up with another guitar player and USC student, Kim McKellar, to form the Hustlers, playing largely but not exclusively Beatles, Rolling Stones, and other British Invasion material. By 1965 that band had mutated into the Wicks, who played some parties and club gigs and parties around L.A., attracting the attention of a producer. "We had an opportunity for a recording deal," says Don, "which eventually kind of fizzled out, but it looked real hot at the time."

The highlights of the Wicks' short career included flying out to Florida to play a Christmas show in Miami Beach. On another occasion they auditioned for a spot on a Lucille Ball television special. "Lucille Ball had a television special she was doing and we got up and auditioned. We did 'All My Loving' and 'The Last Time.' We almost got it, except there was this other band that the same producer was promoting—this real clean-cut, uninteresting instrumental group who did a lot of shtick. They would get on their backs and play the guitars and all this kind of stuff that we thought was kind of lame, but Lucy was impressed by that more than she was impressed by us. And they all had the nice suits and they all looked alike and everything, and so they got the gig, and we didn't."

During this period Don continued to make movies including the aforementioned *Captain America vs. The Mutant, Superman vs. The Gorilla Gang, Wrath of the Sun Demon* and *Rocketman Flies Again*. Several of these were screened in underground theatres, and were publicized in popular monster magazines like *Famous Monsters of Filmland, Castle of*

Frankenstein and *Monsters and Heroes*. Under the pseudonym Mick Rogers, he also penned a nonfiction exploitation paperback, *Freakout on Sunset Strip*, about Southern California's "Mod Generation." "Fags, Freaks and the Famous turn the street into a hippie hell," shouted the book's cover.

Although Don was a gifted filmmaker he generally graded poorly (C's and D's) because of the subject matter of his films. "I was actually called in by the Dean once, and he said, 'We had a meeting about you the other night and we're thinking of basically booting you out of the cinema department because'—quote—'you like to read comic books'– unquote. And at that point I just decided, *OK, I wanna get out of this school. I'm not gonna play the game their way*. My enthusiasm for films plummeted dramatically at that point. And then the Chris & Craig thing happened very shortly after that and I just sort of segued from one to the other. For years I didn't want to have anything to do with movies, I just wanted to play music, so that's what I did."

Chris & Craig's rehearsals were held at a small theatre in Hollywood, which rented out space for bands to practice during the daytime. Along with Smith, Ducey and Glut, there was an unknown drummer and a lead guitarist called Mort Marker. Twenty-nine years old at the time, Marker was already a veteran musician. Back in his native Delaware in 1958 he'd cut a couple of hot rockabilly singles with singer Jimmy Stayton. When Stayton left for the Army, Marker formed his own band, Morty Marker & the Impalas, and recorded a single for the Houston-based Back Beat label. He moved to Los Angeles in 1964 to find work as a session player. Like Glut, he connected with Chris & Craig after seeing a card on the notice board at the Musicians' Union Local 47. The job didn't pay anything, but after meeting Chris & Craig and hearing their songs he decided he'd stick around.

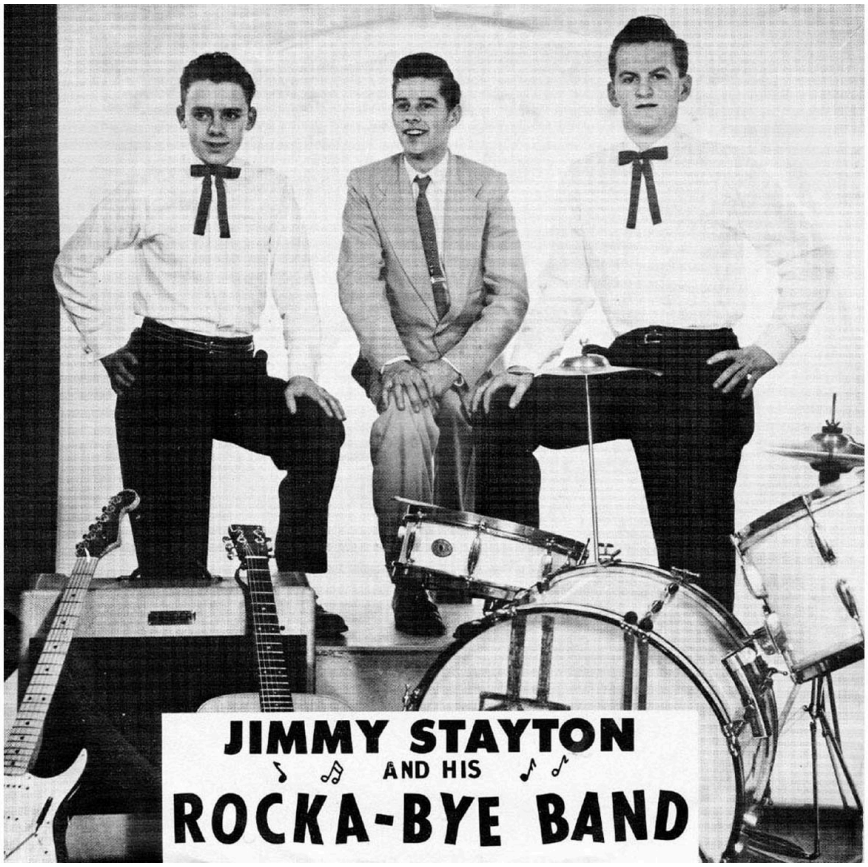
"I was really impressed with those guys," says Marker. "They were fun, and they had some good material, I thought. There was a big difference in their personalities, but when they were working together they had that magic.

"It was always Craig that was the most outgoing," he continues. "Craig I liked immediately as soon as I met him. He just welcomed you in, and that's what I noticed. I could talk to Craig easier than I could talk to Chris. It seemed like I could walk up to Craig and talk to him about anything and

his ears would open up. He was very good at that. He seemed like the kind of guy that cared, you know? It's a personality thing."

Mort was married and had two young children at the time. Since his wife was also working during the day, and they couldn't afford a babysitter, he asked Craig if it would be all right to bring his kids along to rehearsals. Craig naturally said yes, so Marker's children would often come along to watch their father work.

Marker played a big Gibson L5 hollow-body guitar, and his playing sometimes had a jazzy touch, which Chris & Craig liked for some of their material. There were no charts for the songs, but Marker had learned to play by ear and so was able to figure out the sometimes unconventional chord progressions and time signatures their songs demanded. "It always seemed like they knew where they wanted to go with it and they just got together and did it," recalls Marker. "I remember Craig playing rhythm, and he had a very nice rhythm touch. I had a good ear and if somebody had a chord progression that they wanted to do, I could hear that and I knew where to go with it. I think they were impressed with what I was doing melodically and even branching out and improvising—because sometimes they would tell me, 'Go ahead and improvise.' I was playing everything I could think of. But they liked it, and they liked the sound of my big guitar. They were more or less looking for somebody to provide a filler for what they were doing."



Mort Marker (left) with Jimmy Stayton & His Rocka-Bye Band, ca. 1958.

The big hollow-body also allowed Marker to experiment with some Gabor Szabo-inspired feedback, which they also loved—though at that time Mort had no idea that they even knew who Gabor was. “I was using a lot of Gabor-type sounds,” he says, “because I did a lot of his songs in my club gigs—because you could dance to it but there was a jazz tinge to it too. Maybe that’s what they were hearing. They liked some feedback, and I was just getting into that because at that time all the rock players were getting into that. I think Gabor did some of the best feedback I’d ever heard because it was controlled, and I think that’s what they were looking for. I didn’t realize then that they were friends with Gabor or even knew him.”

It wasn’t until after he left the group that Marker discovered that Chris & Craig were familiar with Gabor and his work. “Being a jazz fan, I went down one night to see Gabor Szabo at Shelly’s Manne Hole on North Cahuenga in Hollywood, and they were there. They were glad to see me and I was glad to see them, and I was surprised to see them because I didn’t picture them being into that kind of music. Apparently they knew Gabor

pretty well because they had a conversation with him for quite a while. That was the last time I saw the guys."

Back in the practice room, though, Smith and Ducey were on a creative roll, cranking out new songs on an almost daily basis. "We were always trying out new tunes," says Mort. "Seems like almost every day I went in they had some new tunes that they wanted to try."

They were honing not only a set of exclusively original material, but an entire act that incorporated comedy material between songs. "They were trying to get something not just with the songs, but they wanted to do show-type stuff," says Mort, "not just stand there and sing and play their guitars. They had comedy things they were doing. They had one-liners that were hilarious! It seemed like they enjoyed doing that, and sometimes they'd just throw it in out of the blue—and it worked! I thought they had a lot of talent. When Craig and Chris were singing together, they were very electrifying. I felt very strongly that those guys were gonna make it."

If they were going to make it, though, they were up against some serious competition. Hollywood was teeming with rock & roll talent at the time. The Buffalo Springfield were practicing right next door, and used to stop by to hang out. "We'd take breaks and they'd come over and chit-chat," remembers Mort. "I remember chatting with Neil Young," says Ducey, "and the drummer, Dewey Martin—he was the most friendly." "We all hung out together," adds Glut. "I remember my amplifier blew up one day and their bass player [Bruce Palmer] was trying to fix it for me."

Members of the Springfield were friendly with the Monkees, which could be why Mike Nesmith stopped by one day to check out Chris & Craig. Nesmith was so impressed with their songs that he wanted to get involved. "Mike Nesmith came by and he talked with Craig and Chris," remembers Marker. "I think he was trying to get them a deal. At the time I was with them, that was just starting to happen. I remember him coming by almost every day, it seemed like."

Asher Dann remembers making a call to Nesmith's agent Jerry Perenchio to seal the deal: "The Monkees were owned by Perenchio at that time and so I called Jerry and said, 'Let's just go in the studio, that's what Mike wants to do, and we'll see what comes out. See if they get any interest.'"

Not long afterwards, Dann and Bonafede dropped out. For one thing, they had bigger fish to fry, namely the Doors, whom they'd taken over management of in March 1967. Don Glut remembers the transition from Sal and Ash to Nesmith. "One day while we were rehearsing Mike Nesmith came in," he recalls. "This is when *The Monkees* was already a hit show. He didn't say much; he talked to Chris and Craig and he listened to us. He sat in the audience section and then he left. Then, shortly after that, either Chris or Craig told me, 'It looks like it's over but we're trying to get another manager.' He didn't say it was Mike yet, I don't think, at that point. And so we all went our separate ways. Then one day, a couple of months later, I got a phone call from I think it was Chris, and he says, 'Mike Nesmith is gonna produce us. We're no longer gonna be Chris & Craig, we're gonna be an actual band. We're gonna be called the Penny Arcade." (The word "Arcade" was originally spelled with a c, later amended to a k for trademark purposes.)

In the interim, though, Mort Marker had dropped out of the project. "I wanted to stay with them," he remembers. "I was thinking that here's something that might take a while to materialize, but it might be a good idea if I could stay with them. But I was married and had two kids, and was trying to make ends meet. I was doing some studio work at the time, but not enough to be able to pay all my bills. So I needed to move on. I really hated to tell those guys I wasn't going to be able to do it anymore. They seemed to have a lot of irons in the fire, but nothing came through at that time."

Marker went on to make a living as a working musician, playing on sessions by Gary Puckett & the Union Gap, John Davidson and even Elvis Presley. He's still making music today at age 78. He never forgot Chris & Craig, and remained convinced for many years that they were going to make it big. "I used to often think of those guys," he says. "I thought I probably messed up by leaving them, but I had to do it because I had a family to take care of. I often talked to my wife about it, and people I knew in the business. I used to bring up their names after I left. I always wondered what happened to them because I never seemed to hear anything. But then the next thing I heard was years later when *you* called me. As soon as you did that, it came back to me immediately: *these are the guys I've been thinking about all these years!*"

10

QUINTESSENTIAL LOS ANGELES

"One of the things about the Penny Arkade was that it was really the quintessential L.A. sound," Mike Nesmith told me when I interviewed him in 2003. "During that time I was in the television show so I was out all the time among the music makers in Los Angeles. When I heard them play live I thought *this is such a quintessence of Los Angeles music*. I've never heard it either before or since; it was a strange mixture of country and rock & roll and blues and everything, filtered through this sort of L.A. urban sophistication that *was* the sound of L.A. during that time."

Nesmith doesn't remember how he first connected with Chris & Craig. Maybe it was through Micky Dolenz, who'd gone to school with Craig. Dolenz himself pleads '60s amnesia. Then again, Nesmith may have run into Craig at the Monkees auditions, or at one of the Troubadour's Monday night hoots. Chris Ducey remembers him coming to see Chris & Craig play at a small folk club in Goleta in Santa Barbara County. "We had already bombed with 'Isha' and were over our singles deal with Capitol by that time," says Chris. "After our set we talked with Mike and the process of working with him began."

"I remember seeing them play live and that was the thing that was pivotal," confirms Nesmith. "That was when I became interested in producing them. When I had first gone to Los Angeles I had gotten a job at the Troubadour on Monday nights as an MC for an open mic show, which at the time was called a Hootenanny. Through there came all the people who played. So I started getting a sense of what the L.A. sound was, what people were doing and where the music was coming from. When I heard the songs of [Chris & Craig], I was very much taken with the fact that it was out of

this L.A. mix. When I heard them play as a band, it was just that: *This really does distill what L.A. sounds like at this time and it needs to get on record.*"

Mike Nesmith at his home in the Hollywood Hills where the Penny Arkade rehearsed during 1967-68. (Photo courtesy Don Glut)

At first Nesmith teamed Smith and Ducey with a new rhythm section, bass player John London and drummer Johnny Raines. London and Raines were probably only intended as placeholders, as both were already involved with another group, the Lewis & Clarke Expedition. Nevertheless, photographer Henry Diltz stopped by Nesmith's house on May 10th, 1967 and shot photos of Smith and Ducey both as a duo and with London and Raines.

John London (born John Kuehne) was part of the loose circle of Lone Star transplants, most of them musicians, sometimes referred to as Nesmith's 'Texas Mafia,' a group of friends that also included Michael Martin Murphey, Owen Castleman, David Price and Bruce Barbour, the brother of Mike's wife Phyllis. "Seems like everyone in San Antonio ended up out here because of the Monkees show," says Barbour. Barbour worked

as a stuntman and a stand-in on the show, and went on to become a hugely successful Hollywood stuntman, appearing in countless films and TV shows.

London had played bass in a folk duo with Nesmith back in San Antonio. After relocating to Los Angeles in July 1964 he, Nesmith, Murphey and Castleman had played together in the Survivors, a group put together by Randy Sparks in the wake of his success with the New Christy Minstrels. When Nesmith was cast in *The Monkees*, he got London a job working as his stand-in for the show's first season.

David Price, who worked as a stand-in for Davy Jones, was attending San Antonio College when he first met Nesmith in 1963. "I was involved in the folk music scene in San Antonio," he remembers, "and Mike Nesmith came along and he kind of became the organizing influence on the folk scene, because he started getting gigs for us and putting together these shows, like playing at shopping mall openings, and we did a few sort of concert things too. And so I got to know Mike, and introduced him to his future wife Phyllis, actually, who I'd known since she was about 16."

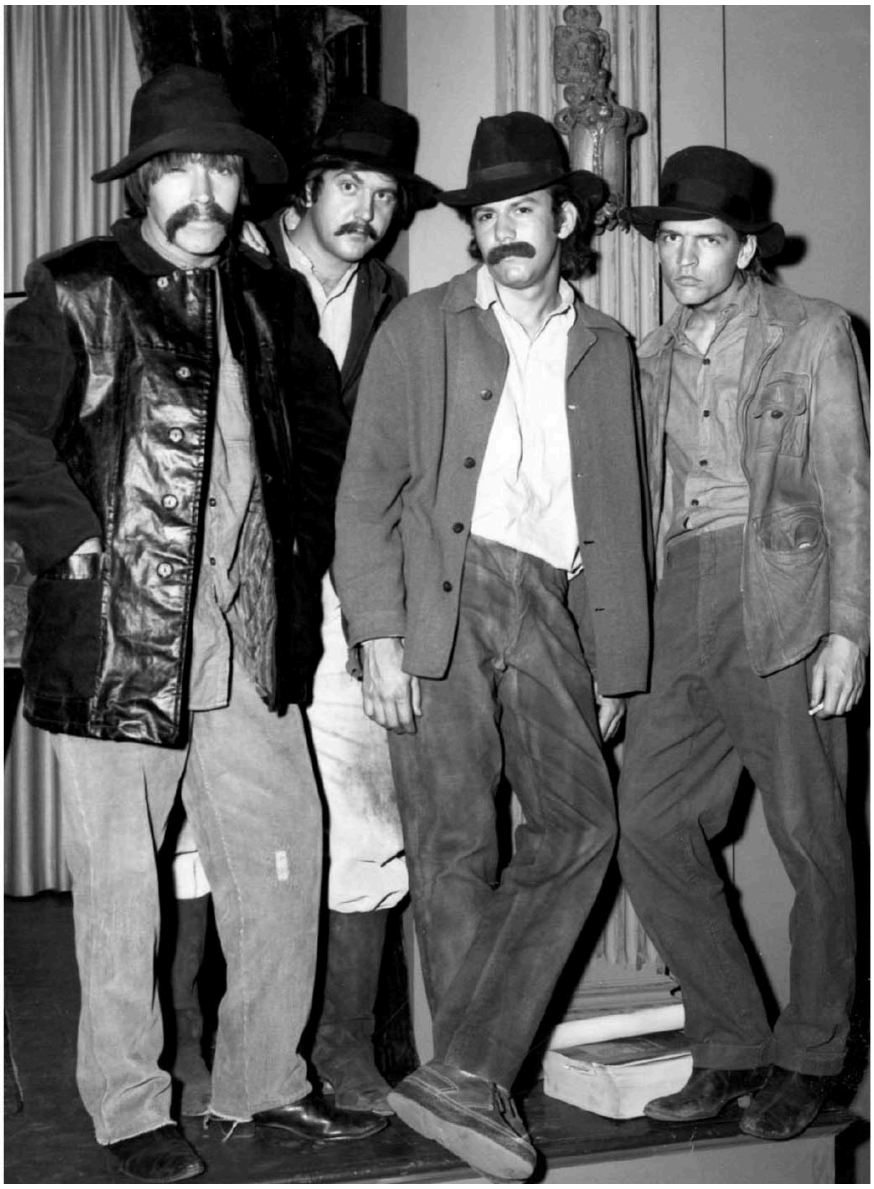
Price then moved to Austin, where he formed a rock band called the Chelsea, which included lead singer George Kinney (later of cult psychedelic group the Golden Dawn), and two musicians who would later figure into the Penny Arkade family tree, lead guitarist John Andrews and bass player Bob Arthur. The Chelsea disbanded in 1966 when Price got a call from Nesmith. "Mike knew that I wanted to get out of Texas, so when he got the Monkees job he called me up and said, 'Do you wanna come out and I'll get you a job on the show?' And I said, 'Sure.' So I packed up my '58 Ford two-door sedan with all my stuff and my bass player, Bob Arthur, and his illegal alien girlfriend, and we drove to L.A. The car made it as far as the curb in front of Mike's house on Sunset Plaza and died. Which was beautiful. I got out of the car and went inside, and that was it. My life changed dramatically after that."

Short-lived lineup of the Chris & Craig band, May 10, 1967. Left to right: John London, Craig Smith, Johnny Raines, Chris Ducey. (Photo: Henry Diltz)

The Nesmiths' Hollywood home was the hangout spot while they waited around to start filming the TV show. "When I came out here they had done the pilot and sold the pilot," recounts Price. "They were getting ready to go into production, so the four guys were sort of on hold for the moment. They were getting a stipend, a little bit of money each week, and they were waiting for the show to start filming. Davy was staying at Mike's at the time and he and I hit it off right away. He was a very nice guy. We'd sit out on the hood of my no longer functioning car and wait for the Greenblatt's Delicatessen guy to bring up ribs to go. When the show started shooting, each of the four guys had a friend who signed on as their stand-in. Mike had John London, Peter had David Pearl, and Micky had Rick Klein. Well, Davy picked me. The interesting thing about that is I'm five ten and Davy's *not* five ten!" he laughs. "So what I had to do a lot was crouch. But it gave me great thighs. I've got thighs that still serve me well!"

Bruce Barbour took over the Nesmith stand-in role when London's musical activities began to consume more of his time. Costumed in fringe, suede and buckskin, the Lewis & Clarke Expedition was fronted by two other ex-Survivors: Michael Martin Murphey (as Travis Lewis) and Owen

Castleman (Boomer Clarke), and also included Ken Bloom on guitar and keyboards, and Johnny Raines on drums. With Nesmith's help, the group landed a record deal with the Monkees' label, Colgems, and by the second half of 1967 they were off and running, releasing records, making TV appearances and getting regular coverage in the teen magazines. Nesmith hoped to facilitate similar opportunities for Chris & Craig, whom he next teamed with another Texas transplant, drummer Bobby Donaho.



The Monkees stand-ins, 1966. L to R: Rick Klein, John London, David Pearl, David Price. (Photo: Henry Diltz)

Originally a native of Corpus Christi, Donaho had cut his teeth with the Titans before joining garage-punk monsters the Bad Seeds alongside Mike Taylor (vocals, guitar), Rod Prince (lead guitar) and Henry Edgington (bass). He drummed on all three of their now sought-after singles, including "All Night Long" and "A Taste of the Same." "We were pretty popular," remembers Donaho, "but we all just started moving in different directions. Mike [Taylor] and I never really agreed on a whole lot of things. I thought we had agreed to disagree but evidently he took it personally."

Prince and Donaho reconfigured as the New Seeds with Roy Cox on keyboards and Steve Lohse on bass, but when that didn't work out they decided to head out to L.A. and try to get something going there. "Roy and I went out there first in his Volkswagen and had the time of our lives," remembers Donaho, "so we went back and got Rod. We drove Rod out there with us and had a big old house and a couple of fun bands: the Willowdale Handcar, things like that. Then we kind of started drifting off and I started working more with Mike Nesmith."

Donaho had originally met Nesmith back in Texas. "He and John London did folk singing, and they'd come down and play the Green Frog in Corpus every now and then, so I kind of knew who they were. And then I met him after one of the concerts we did. We were already planning on going to L.A., and we did our last concert and I met him in the hotel room and he ended up asking me to take his GTO to L.A. for him. We ended up spending the night in jail in El Centro because it had manufacturer's plates, because it was a gift from Pontiac. So we got a grand theft auto charge until the Colgems office could open in the morning. This was with Rod. It was quite a time."

Prince and Cox returned to Texas in late 1966 where they formed Bubble Puppy, while Donaho stayed back in L.A., where he played for a time with the Lamp of Childhood before being approached by Nesmith for the Penny Arkade project in the early summer of 1967.

To convince Bobby to join, Mike first played him an acetate of a couple of songs recently recorded by Chris and Craig, Ducey's "Rhyme or Reason" (a.k.a. "No Rhyme or Reason") and Smith's "(She Brought Me) Something Beautiful." Donaho was immediately impressed by the level of their songwriting. "The first time I heard 'Something Beautiful' I was just like

‘*Yeah!* Show me to these guys!’” enthuses Donaho. “That was the first thing I ever heard by them.”

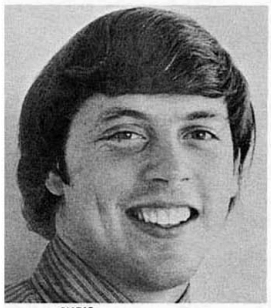
Soon afterwards, Bobby was introduced to Ducey and Smith for the first time at Nesmith’s house. Chris and Craig made an immediate impression on him: “Oh God!” he laughs. “I thought they were the Sunnybrook Farm guys or something. Really nice! I really enjoyed them. Big smiles. Wholesome kind of guys—big white teeth, always smiling and sassy, you know what I mean?”

The cheerful, wholesome image projected by Chris and Craig was a change of tempo for Donaho, who summarily had his shoulder-length hair trimmed by the Monkees’ hairstylist Michael Graber. “First time I ever had to cut my hair to join a band!” Bobby reflects with a chuckle. The rest of the group—including the returning Don Glut—also had their hair styled by Graber and were outfitted in deep blue double-breasted suits.

“Mike was looking not just for good musicians but for personality types,” explains Don, “and I just pushed the right buttons. Back then my hair was—I guess in the sun—a little bit redder-looking than it is now, and I had made the comment, just a non sequitur: ‘You know, not many people name their kids Quasimodo anymore.’ Well, Mike thought this was just hysterical and he went around telling people for days: ‘I met this guy with *flaming red* hair’—was how he described me—‘who’s loon-crazy!’ That was one of their Texas expressions: ‘loon-crazy.’ Around that time he also decided that we needed nicknames. So Bobby Donaho became ‘Dunny,’ for some reason, and I became ‘Marvel’ because of my interest in the character Captain Marvel and also Marvel Comics. And to this day some people from that period only know me as Marvel.”

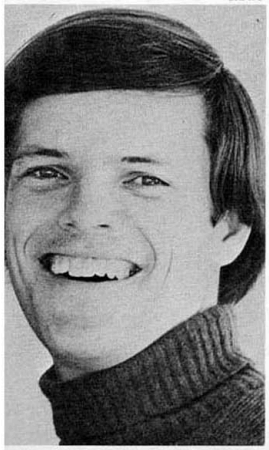
CHRIS and CRAIG

Mike Nesmith's Groovy New Singing Discoveries!



CHRIS

CRAIG



Chris and Craig of The Penny Arcade are tall, brown-haired and beautiful. Chris has hazel eyes and one of the zaniest personalities that ever existed in a six foot two inch frame. Craig is a totally groovy guy, five feet ten inches tall and has the most unbelievable green eyes you've ever seen. He has a dry sense of humor coupled with a serious and thoughtful outlook on life which is balanced beautifully by Chris's zany and carefree outlook on everything. The two, together have one of the most outasite sounds we here at TIGER BEAT have heard in the lifetime span of an elephant. Apparently Mike Nesmith agrees with us and he is now producing them for Buddah. Records.

FIRST MEETING

Chris first met Craig when the two were in New York auditioning for a show very similar to the Monkees called "The Happeners." The audition was successful; Craig, Chris and a girl named Massy got the lead parts. They filmed an hour color pilot, but for some reason "The Happeners" just didn't happen.

All was not in vain though, because Chris and Craig were forced to work so hard together to win the audition that it made them very close friends. They began singing at parties, just for fun, and when everyone began raving about their super sound, the idea for a group came quite naturally.

And what a group it is! There are only two of them, but their great humor, their fantastic songs, their outasite sounds make you think there must be six of them! But there are only two and both are groovy guys.

CHRIS

Ask Chris to describe his personality and you don't wait long for an answer. "I'm intelletcually orientated, but fun, basically fun." He likes honest and frank girls. His basic attitude is "give everything you've got to what you're doing." It's obvious in everything he and Craig do that he truely believes what he says.

There is no doubt however, that a young man named Chris belongs in the select group of stars. Chris is a slightly nutty guy with a surprising mind. He can be as innocent as a child one minute and pulling the biggest practical joke in the world the next. He is entirely different from his cohort, companion and partner in song and merriment—Craig Smith.

CRAIG

Craig has two main interests that stand out above all others—music and girls—all kinds like redheads, blondes and brunettes. His choice of a female companion depends upon his mood. He sees different things in different girls, but basically he loves them all. He is an ex-member of the Goodtime Singers.

Craig loves his freedom and the challenges that Showbusiness offers. He generates a certain excitement with his bubbling moods and being the serious thinker that he is may fool you because you can never tell whether he's thinking deep thoughts while being bubbly.

Craig just recently obtained a house with a beautiful view from the living room of the valley below. So at present, Craig is super busy with his new hobby—interior decorating.

When the two young men finally got together, there was the task of choosing a name. They had been performing around Santa Barbara as "Old Man Time and his Micky Mouse Watch," but they thought that might not fit on a record label. So, they chose "The Penny Arcade" because a penny arcade is "light, happy, and at the same time it's weird. It takes in every aspect of life—sorrow, happiness, everything."

When you add his voice to Craig's during an appearance, you'll discover as we did that Chris and Craig of the Penny Arcade do have the outasite sound heard in the lifetime span of an elephant.

Tiger Beat magazine, August 1967.

11

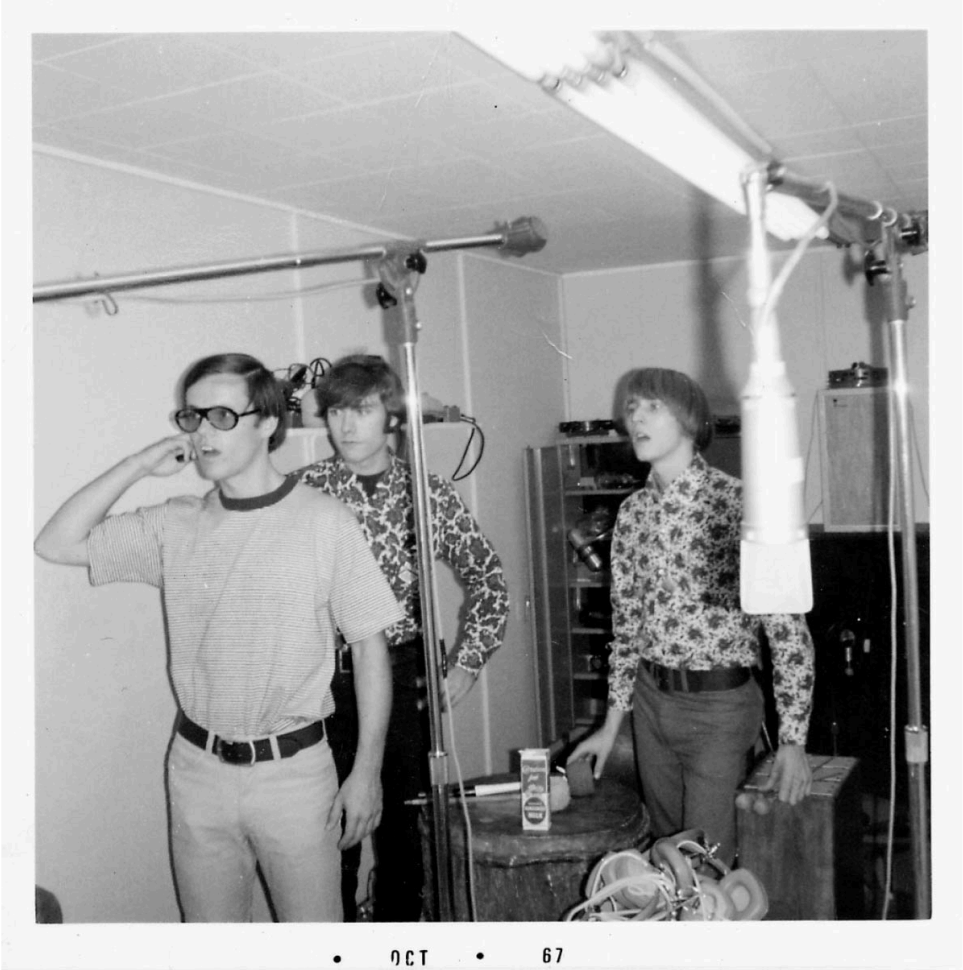
HANDS OF THE CLOCK

Hands of the clock going 'round
Making syncopated sound
Always tick in endless drone
Steady moving monotone

Although the duo of Chris & Craig had now expanded into a self-contained quartet, with four distinct "personality types," the Penny Arkade was not a democracy by any means. The band was a vehicle for Smith's and Ducey's songs with Glut and Donaho, as Marvel and Dunny, in supporting roles. The first press reports on the act—in *Tiger Beat* in the summer and fall of '67—featured pictures of only Chris and Craig. "I didn't get it from Chris at all," says Don, "but Craig always made it seem that he was somehow 'above' the rest of us. It was like there was me, Bobby and Chris over to one side, and then Craig by himself."

As Bruce Barbour sees it, Craig dominated the band by sheer force of personality. "Penny Arkade was a great band, but Craig just transcended the band and everything just by the brilliance of his personality. He was just one of those guys who walked in the room and every girl in the place just gravitated to him. He was such a physically good-looking guy, and he'd crack that smile with those beautiful white teeth and right away you were smiling too, and you wanted to *know* this guy. He was intelligent and funny and talented—he was just one of those *great* guys that within minutes you'd go, 'God, what a cool guy!'"

Rehearsals with the new lineup began immediately, and continued several days a week as they familiarized themselves with a growing repertoire of exclusively original material. “Mike just said, ‘Go rehearse!’” recalls Bobby. “So we went and rehearsed, and we rehearsed, and we rehearsed a lot.”



Craig Smith, Don Glut and Bobby Donaho at TTG Studios, October 1967. (Photo courtesy Chris Ducey)

The first rehearsals were at a Hollywood Hills house Craig was now sharing with John London and a couple of other roommates. The Lewis & Clarke Expedition also practiced there. “It was one of those houses suspended by the poles,” Don Glut recalls. “I remember once a knock at the door, the door opens and we’re rehearsing and it’s Dan Duryea, the actor

who did all those old film noir movies, wearing shorts and holding a little dog. ‘Can you guys turn down? You guys are making too much noise!’”

“We used to take turns practicing up there,” Craig later told *Tiger Beat* magazine (the quote was mistakenly attributed to Chris). “But all the neighbors started complaining—and then they started sending up the police. So we stopped playing there completely.”

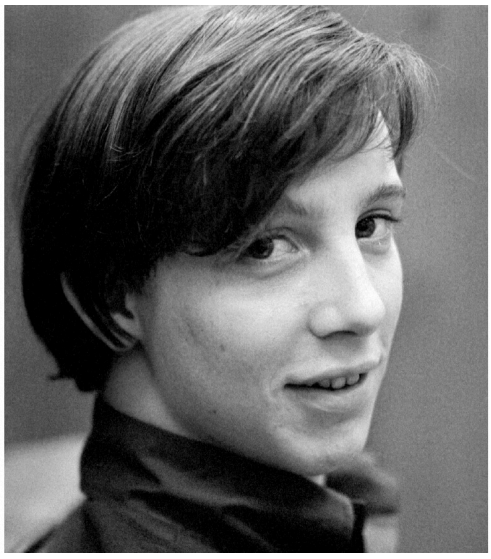
Their rehearsals were then relocated to Mike Nesmith’s place on Sunset Plaza Drive, a few blocks up from the Whisky. “Mike, in order to better monitor our progress, invited us to move our rehearsals to the Nesmith home, playing in a room adjacent to the house’s sunken living room,” remembers Don. “A few months later, after Mike and his wife Phyllis and young son Christian moved into a considerably larger house in the Hollywood Hills, we moved too. There we were awarded our own rehearsal room, a nearly soundproofed haven where we could turn up our amplifiers and get as loud as we needed or wanted to be.”

Don Glut and his mother with the Nesmiths, 1968. (Photo courtesy Don Glut)

Bruce Barbour—who had moved out from San Antonio to live with his sister Phyllis and brother-in-law Mike—was around for many of the Penny Arkade rehearsals. “I would go down whenever they were rehearsing and just listen to them,” he remembers. “They were fantastic. It’s beyond me why they didn’t get huge. I was so much younger than them—I think I was 17—and I just idolized the guys, I really did, but Craig especially. I smoked a ton of grass back then, everyone did, and Craig would smile and he’d look at you and say [he puts on a funny voice] ‘You’re pretty stoned, aren’t ya?’ You’d get the giggles and say, ‘Yes, I guess I am.’ ‘OK, well, we’re gonna play a song for Bruce because he’s stoned.’ But it flattered the hell out of me just ’cause he took notice of me. He was that kind of personality. He just took over the room when he walked in.”

Craig and Bruce had a little comedy rapport going between them. Bruce was doing stand-in and stunt work on the Monkees show so Craig would always greet him with, “Hey Bruce! How’s show business treatin’ ya?” And Bruce would always have a witty rejoinder prepared: “Well… it’s not all limousines and autographs!” was one he remembers had Craig rolling on the floor. “Well… it’s not all blondes and blowjobs!” was another. “We kept that up for months,” he remembers. “Craig just had a way of making you feel special by paying attention to you that way.”

Certain other people, like David Price, preferred Chris Ducey’s company. “Chris and I, we got to be friends,” says Price. “Chris and his wife and my wife at the time used to play pinochle together, guys against the girls. But Craig was intense. Chris was very focused professionally, but he was a more laid-back personality and more of a fun sort of a guy. Craig I always felt was a lot more serious about what he was doing, and he was pretty intense. Any of the times I spent with the two of them in the room—me, them and whoever else, maybe we were at a party or something like that—I just ended up spending not that much time with Craig, just because my personality and Chris’ were more of a match, I think. But I liked Craig. We got along fine.”



Bruce Barbour, November 1967. (Photo: Henry Diltz)

After Chris Ducey got married, he and Craig didn't socialize as much anymore outside of the band. When he wasn't rehearsing, Chris would stay home with his family, while Craig would hit the Strip with Jason Laskay or Don Glut. "We had two married guys in the band," explains Don. "One was Bobby Donaho and one was Chris. Craig and I would go out to parties looking for girls and things, and go hanging out at Gazzarri's and places, while Chris went home to his wife and Bobby went home to his wife."

Glut also found time to make another movie during 1967: *Atom-Man vs. Martian Invaders* with himself in the titular super hero role and a girlfriend, Melody Raber, and Bobby Donaho as interplanetary invaders.

With *The Monkees* TV show and recording career by now in overdrive, Nesmith had an extremely busy schedule, but with the Penny Arkade ensconced at his home sometimes six days a week, he found time to look in on them and offer his encouragement and suggestions. "Mike was excited by just about everything we did," remembers Don. "I mean, he really liked us and he really saw us as a way of, I think, showing the world that he was not just 'Old Wool Hat' from *The Monkees* show. He was very self-conscious about that, because when he came out here from Texas he was a serious musician, a serious songwriter, a serious singer, and then suddenly he got lumped in with all the Monkees nonsense."

As Nesmith sees it, his role was more as a facilitator than anything, and the group was basically left to their own devices. "I don't remember a lot of

interaction," he says, "because I was quite busy. I had a rehearsal room at my house on Mulholland so that was a place that they could rehearse. Really I just had a facility, and I wasn't around too much for helping them —it was very internal to the band."

Soon after their association began, one of Craig's songs, "Salesman," caught Mike's attention, and he decided to record it with the Monkees. "It's about a dope salesman," Craig later explained to Mike Love. "Craig was a prolific writer," says Mike. "He's a good writer and 'Salesman' I thought was a good pop song. It had a sensibility that—I mean, it didn't come across this way in the Monkees—but it reminded me of Doug Sahm's 'She's About a Mover.' That was what intrigued me about it. But by the time it went through the filter," he laughs, "it didn't quite come out the way Doug sounded, but that's what drew me to it."

The Monkees, with Nesmith on lead vocals, recorded "Salesman" on June 14th, 1967 at RCA Victor Studio A in Hollywood ("Daydream Believer" and "Words" were tracked at the same session). "Salesman" became the lead-off track on the Monkees' chart-topping fourth album, *Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn & Jones*, which was released in November 1967—another big payday for Craig, who was now starting to make a name for himself as a songwriter. Another of his songs, "Rapid Transit," had been recorded by the Robbs, who had replaced Paul Revere & the Raiders as the house band on the Dick Clark-produced ABC-TV show *Where the Action Is*. The Robbs' "Rapid Transit" single was released by Mercury in April, and reached the substrata of the sales charts at #123.

Even more impressive musically was a 1967 single by Heather MacRae featuring two of Craig's compositions, "Hands of the Clock" and "Lazy Sunny Day." Sheila MacRae was recording an album for ABC Records at the time, called *How Sweet She Is*, which also featured Heather's guest vocals on a couple of tracks. Producer Bob Thiele liked Heather's voice so much that he suggested she make a record of her own, something more contemporary. "They wanted material for me," she remembers, "and so I said, 'My friend has two great songs.'" Thiele was Gabor Szabo's producer at the time, so he and Craig may already have been acquainted. Either way, he and the label people liked both the songs enough to green-light a recording session. Not only that, Craig would also share a producer's credit with Thiele. This was a big deal. Thiele produced some of the giants of jazz,

including John Coltrane, Charles Mingus, Duke Ellington and Count Basie, so a co-production credit was an impressive piece of plumage for Craig's cap, and an indication of the ease with which he was moving among the music industry's elite talents at the time.

Sheila and Heather MacRae, 1967.

AFM recording contracts show that the songs were recorded at United Recorders in Hollywood. Sidney Feller, who was also working on Sheila's album, was the band arranger for the first session on June 7th, 1967, which included Glen Campbell on guitar, Larry Knechtel on bass, and Jim Gordon on drums. Then Craig himself directed a "sweetening" session on the afternoon of June 14th, hiring Jim Gordon to overdub percussion, along with studio engineer Eddie Brackett. He also brought Don Glut and Bobby Donaho in to help out, and collect union scale wages—65 bucks each.

“Craig was really good in the studio,” remembers Heather. “He was just so versatile; he was a real renaissance person—he could do anything really!”

“Hands of the Clock” is an extraordinary piece of psychedelic pop. The unerringly pretty melody line is a perfect fit for Heather’s sweet, unaffected voice, while the compelling lyrics about the unstoppable march of time lead the song into more shadowy territory. It plunges midway through into two boldly experimental instrumental sections with eerie sound effects and disembodied voices, and ends with a clamor of ticking clocks. Craig made clever use of the studio’s brick-lined echo chambers to magnify the ominous, otherworldly atmosphere he wanted to create. Bobby was instructed to pluck the strings of the studio’s grand piano for a ghostly music box effect, Don played chimes to mark the tolling of time, and all of them sang backup harmonies. “I banged those chimes like Quasimodo played the bells!” jokes Glut. The overall effect was quite stunning, but the single went largely unnoticed as it was given only a very limited release by ABC in August.

That summer, Craig’s connections to the MacRae family landed Chris & Craig a two-week gig at the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas, where they appeared in the Versailles Room as part of Sheila MacRae’s stage show. Their part of the act was as a vocal group together with Heather and her brother Gar. “My mom would get offers for things where she wanted to be hip and cool,” laughs Heather, “so that’s why she wanted us to sing with her. She called us Heather and Her Feathers and we sang backup for ‘If You’re Going to San Francisco’ and ‘The Happening,’ which was by the Supremes. My mom liked to change clothes, and she also did impersonations, so we also sang this special material that introduced her doing her imitations.”

“Sheila was gonna open for Marty Allen and Steve Rossi—the comedians Allen & Rossi—on the big stage at the Riviera Hotel,” explains Chris Ducey. “In ’67 Vegas was like the sleepiest place in the world. So Craig somehow, for us to make money, talks them into creating this little schticky show where Sheila has four people singing and doing this little dance step behind her, right? And it’s us, meaning Chris, Craig, Heather and Gar. And we’re in like blue sweaters and white pants, singing. But they did let us do one Chris & Craig song in the middle of the set. I think we came out with guitars and did one song and that was their token to us, and then

we were on behind them for the rest of the show. It was two sets a night, 7:00 and 11:00, seven nights a week for two weeks."

"They were Heather and the Happeners," laughs Bobby Donaho. "They were wearing powder-blue sweaters and did a little dance behind her when she sang. I was so glad that I didn't have to do that."

Bobby and Don tagged along to Vegas so that Penny Arkade rehearsals could continue during Chris and Craig's engagement with Sheila. "We just set up in one of the big rehearsal rooms at the Riviera and rehearsed just like we were at home," remembers Bobby. "Except it was a lot hotter. I remember Don and I walking across the Strip. There was a little coffee shop between the Riviera and the rooms, and we were broke and just burning up. We could just barely make it to the coffee shop for the air conditioning. I had one nickel, and a Coke was a dime. So I gave it to Don and he put it in a slot machine and we got four nickels and bought two Cokes!"

"We had all our instruments," recalls Don, "but I think we just kinda hung around and picked up girls and the usual thing. I think we might have rehearsed one afternoon day. We used to hang around the pool with Sheila and Heather and the other sister, Meredith, who was on *Petticoat Junction*. Sheila took us out to see the Supremes at the Copa. That was a great experience. We sat in a booth that, as I recall, was just several yards away from the group!"

"We also went to a club and saw Morgana King and Maynard Ferguson," remembers Heather. "We saw all these great people that would perform in the lounges that were like geniuses. We always had a lot of fun, me and Craig and my brother."

Another night they caught Sly & the Family Stone, who were honing their act with a three-month stint at a small club called the Pussycat a Go Go. "It was the most exciting thing we'd ever seen," says Chris. "Oh my God, were they smokin'!"

Midway through Sly's set, though, Bobby Donaho, who had yet to turn 21, was hauled out of the club for being underage. "The cops came in and took him away in handcuffs," recalls Don. "He got arrested; he spent the night in jail." After a call to the jail from the Monkees' management in L.A., Bobby was released. "They let me out with apologies," laughs Bobby, "which I thought was very interesting."

Bruce Barbour was also hanging out in Vegas at the time, and they rode back to L.A. with him in Micky Dolenz's car. "It was Bruce, me, and maybe Bobby," recalls Don. "On the way back we stopped at some restaurant to get hamburgers and they wouldn't serve us because we had long hair. I'd never really experienced that before. We sat there for like an hour and finally we realized that they weren't gonna serve us. We made some nasty comments and left."

In 1967 Craig Smith renewed his acquaintance with the Clinger sisters, whom he'd first met at the Allentown Fair in the summer of 1965. Like Craig, the sisters had continued to push forward in the music business, evolving from a wholesome family vocal group into a self-contained rock band, with Peggy singing lead and playing keyboards, Melody on guitar, Debra on bass, and Patsy on drums. The Clinger family had recently moved from Canoga Park to a house on Moorpark Street in Studio City. Coincidentally Craig's eldest brother Chuck, then a police officer, lived right across the street, which is likely how Craig reconnected with the girls.

The Clingers' house was a big hangout spot for the kids from nearby North Hollywood High School, and Craig was soon a frequent visitor to the house too. "Craig would come over and we would walk down to Henry's taco stand," remembers Patsy Clinger. "Henry's taco stand was on one corner of Moorpark and Tujunga, and the other side was the Firehouse, a hamburger joint, and both of them were just inundated at that time. Everybody would go down there, and because we were right there on Moorpark, a half a block up, and we had our music, people would come up to the house—all the kids from North Hollywood High School. We went to a professional school so we didn't go to a regular high school. But all those kids would come into our house and our back room area where we had our music studio. Later we had to take it upstairs because it got too noisy and the neighbors were complaining so we had to soundproof everything."

Over the next year or so, Craig frequently dropped by the house to chat with the girls and to sing and play guitars together. "Craig always had a phenomenal smile," remembers Melody Clinger. "He was happy. He always seemed engaging; he brought everybody in to him. I mean he was just so sweet and so nice. I just loved being around him. Plus he would involve us

in his music, and so it would be the fun thing. I remember Craig and I sitting on our stairs and playing guitars, and I remember all of us up in our bedrooms playing guitars and just wailing away. We just loved singing harmony."

Sometimes Craig would play them a new song he was working on. Patsy remembers one in particular, "Holly," a romantic ballad with the kind of flowery poetic lyrics that would come to typify much of Craig's work: "*On a velvet wind she comes to me each day / When I'm lonely / Holly enters my mind.*"

"He sang it for us first, I think," remembers Patsy, "and we thought it was just beautiful."

Craig had written the song for his girlfriend at the time, Holly Mershon, an attractive, willowy blonde singer who was a member of the Doodletown Pipers, a sunshine-drenched easy listening vocal group who appeared frequently in Vegas and Reno, and on television variety shows. The Pipers released a couple of albums on Epic that make the Good Time Singers sound like the Stooges (a 1997 episode of *The Simpsons* revealed that Homer Simpson was a Doodletown Pipers fan). "Holly was a very lovely person," says Heather MacRae. "I got to know her when she was going with Craig and she just seemed so nice. They were just such a beautiful couple, all-American looking. They just looked like they had it all."

Although Craig was besotted enough with Holly to write a song for her, he'd also developed a major attraction to Peggy Clinger. The Clingers' lead singer, who'd had a crush on Craig back in '65, was now 18 and blossoming in the limelight. "Craig was definitely interested in her," confirms Patsy. "Definitely! And I think that's one of the reasons that he was coming around so much." By this time, though, Peggy's earlier crush on Craig had worn off. "She had grown up," explains Patsy. "She had now come into her own. She had been dating someone else that she was interested in, and I think that attraction to Craig was not as strong as what it was way back when she was a little girl and looking up at this guy. Craig was crazy about Peggy, and Peggy loved him to death as a friend, but not as a boyfriend.

The Clingers in 1967 in front of their home on Moorpark Street in Studio City where Craig spent a lot of time. L to R: Melody, Peggy, Patsy, Debra. (Photo courtesy Patsy Clinger)

"But we were all in love with him as a human being," she adds, "including my mom and dad, the whole family. He loved my little brothers and sisters. It was like he was the Pied Piper when he'd come over. I cannot say enough wonderful things about him."

In the two years since they'd first met in Allentown, Craig had also been through some major changes. That radiant smile was still a constant, but he was no longer the lighthearted folk singer and all-around entertainer he'd been in the Good Time Singers. He was now fixated on his songwriting, and harbored starry-eyed, utopian visions of changing the world. "I think the songwriting was really the thing that was most important to him," remembers Patsy. "He loved the performing and thought that was awesome, but he was really into writing music and coming up with this great stuff that would kind of shape the world. He had a lot of ideas. He was really a 'put a little love in your heart' guy. At the same time, his music was also so melodic. He really was a melody man. So we talked a lot about that and how his voice was so perfect with our harmonies and things like that."

Patsy began dating Bruce Barbour after meeting him at a Penny Arkade show at Gazzarri's, and subsequently the Clingers also began holding rehearsals at Mike Nesmith's house. There was some talk of Nesmith

producing them, but they went on to work instead with Terry Melcher and Bruce Johnston, and, a little later, with Michael Lloyd, Kim Fowley, and Craig's old Grant High School classmate, Mike Curb.

Meanwhile rehearsals continued for the Penny Arkade at the Nesmith house. As arrangements fell into place Mike would take them into the studio to cut demos. Several tracks were recorded during the summer of 1967, first at TTG Studios in Hollywood (run by "Two Terrible Guys": Tom Hidley and Ami Hadani), where they recorded Craig's hard-strumming "Split Decision," along with three of Chris' tunes, "No Rhyme or Reason," "Sick and Tired," and the 'old-timey' "You Couldn't Conquer Me." Most, if not all, of these four songs dated back to the Chris & Craig days, and were soon cast aside as the group began to find their own, more evolved style of playing.

That style, flavored by the influence of the Byrds and the Buffalo Springfield, was in evidence when Mike took them into Wally Heider's Studio 3 in Hollywood that fall. There they demoed Smith's "Swim," "Voodoo Spell" and "Century of Distance," and Ducey's "Lights of Dawn" (with Nesmith lending a hand on cowbell) and "The Freeze." All of these tracks (along with the TTG recordings) appeared on the Penny Arkade's *Not the Freeze* CD, released by Sundazed in 2004. With the notable exception of "Voodoo Spell," a lively Bo Diddley-beat thumper, the performances on these early versions are a little tentative, as first-take demos tend to be. All would be rerecorded later in more fully formed versions.

"The Freeze," a seven-minute 'suite' constructed from pieces from half a dozen of Chris' songs, underwent the biggest transformation with the addition of new sections from several of Craig's songs. "We'd write all these songs, and Craig at that time definitely was a more advanced writer," admits Chris. "I only had a couple of songs that I thought were worthy, but I had all these tidbits that I created this concept for. We wove it together like a little puzzle. So we flipped my little parts and stuck one of his parts in there, and another of his parts in there. I think there are two parts out of six or seven that are his, and the rest of mine. Maybe that was the beginning of where we were gonna start integrating [as writers], but I don't know."

"I got a call one day from Chris," remembers Don, "and he said, 'We got an incredible idea. We're gonna take all these songs and we're gonna put them together and we're gonna make one long song. It's gonna fill up a

side of an album and that's gonna be called 'Not the Freeze.' And he told me the songs they were gonna do. One was 'Hands of the Clock'; one was 'Flash Burn'—I forget what else—and then he also wrote some new connecting material that would get from one to the other. What really intrigued me about it was the time changes, because there was a scene where we'd go from 4/4 time to 3/4 time without missing a beat; it just *perfectly* slid into it. I'd never heard anything like 'Not the Freeze' before. It was challenging. It was brilliant, I thought."

The concept of interweaving several different songs or themes into a complete piece was not without precedent—the Who's "A Quick One While He's Away" and Buffalo Springfield's "Broken Arrow" are two examples—but nobody had attempted it on such a grand scale. With the addition of Craig's material—including a section from "Hands of the Clock"—and a short Mothers-inspired freakout/breakdown, the retitled "Not the Freeze" clocked in at around 12 1/2 minutes.

Along with the expanded "Not the Freeze," several more outstanding songs were added to the Penny Arkade's repertoire during this period, including "Thesis" and "Love Rain" (both by Chris), and Craig's "Color Fantasy." By the fall of '67, Nesmith felt the group was ready to record an album. At the time Mike had a production deal with Dot Records (who later released his *Wichita Train Whistle* album) and felt he could interest the label in a full Penny Arkade album, or failing that shop it around elsewhere. With this in mind he took the group into RCA's Hollywood studios, where the Monkees did most of their recording, to lay down the basic tracks for nine songs, with vocal and percussion overdubs added a few days later at Wally Heider's.

"I wasn't a particularly good producer," admits Nesmith, "but I had access to the production tools so at least we got it down. I don't know whether we were using four-track or eight-track, but it was something pretty minimal that we recorded it on. So they had to play in the studio live, just the same way they played on a rehearsal stage or on a nightclub stage. They had to go in and duplicate the sound. There weren't isolation booths with multitracks, and you couldn't stack things up and overdub things, the way contemporary records are made. Basically you went in the studio, there was half a dozen or a dozen mics stuck around, and everybody played—just loud and live.

Chris Ducey recording with the Penny Arkade at TTG Studio, 1967. (Photo courtesy Chris Ducey)

"So that process was also particularly good for this because they really did sound the way they sounded. And the way they sounded was what I was hearing on the streets of Los Angeles in a particularly rare time for Los Angeles. It was the same time groups like the Byrds were playing, and the Springfield were playing and Linda [Ronstadt] was singing—you know, there's probably six or seven other big musical acts that came from that time that were from around there and once you heard them live they all sort of sounded a particular way. But I felt like Chris and Craig had captured something with the way they were arranging songs that was particularly of the Los Angeles of the era.

"There was also something else: at the time you couldn't get a record that was longer than two-and-a-half minutes played on the radio; you couldn't get that kind of airtime, so all pop records tended to be two-and-a-half minutes long. So it was refreshing to hear these four- or five-minute songs, and I mean 'Not the Freeze' is what? Twelve minutes long? So that was a big departure! Those big long excursions just didn't happen musically

in popular music either. So all of those things combined to make me think this was something that I needed to take time and do."

"Lights of Dawn" was one of the standout tracks of the sessions, and was slated to be the lead-off track on the proposed album. Chris and Craig's bright harmonies ring out over a springy "Taxman"-style groove, soaring to a kind of airborne transcendence on the "*Time, time, time, time*" bridge. Chris also came up with the inventively structured "Thesis" on which Chris and Craig harmonize over just their own acoustic guitars and some subtle percussion. "Bobby and I played our regular instruments on 'Thesis'," remembers Don; "but while we continued to play our parts during live performances of this number, it was deemed more appropriate to delete them from the final mix and leave the acoustic guitars and some percussion to carry the instrumental track."

Craig's "Country Girl" was the most commercial song recorded that day, and also the oldest, dating back to their repertoire as a duo. The ebullient harmonies and sparkling country-rock arrangement are suggestive of the Buffalo Springfield—except the Springfield never wrote a song as overtly catchy and commercial as this one. Had it been released as a single, "Country Girl" could have been a hit record for the Penny Arkade. Glen Campbell recognized as much, recording his own version a year or two later. It was included on his *Try A Little Kindness* album in 1969.

Craig's more recent compositions had taken a psychedelic left turn, both musically and lyrically. The shimmering guitars and entrancing harmonies of "Color Fantasy"—as well as Craig's hazy, mysterioso recorder solo—perfectly complement the wide-eyed wonder of the lyrics, which are overtly suggestive of an LSD experience:

Stained glass multiplies
The rainbow world before my eyes.
And all the violets and jasmine leaves
Explode in color fantasy.

If Craig was had been experimenting with LSD, though, he appears to have kept it to himself at the time. "We were just smoking a little bit of pot," remembers Ducey. "At least that was all *I* was doing. I don't know what he was doing; I wasn't with him every second of the day." "Craig and

I never took LSD together," insists Jason Laskay. "I took a little acid with Richie Baskin, but I was too paranoid to take drugs. But I'm sure Craig could have taken it because he would get *out there* sometimes. We used to go out sometimes and we would be so stoned that—you know those streets that have the grass in the middle, like on Sunset?—Craig would pull up onto that and we'd drive through the sprinklers like at 1 in the morning, out of our minds, laughing and stoned. So, yeah, I think he would do other stuff like acid. I think he knew that I didn't do it or that I was afraid to take it so he didn't offer it to me after a while."

Going back to the album, the lyrics of "Swim" were also psychedelically inspired:

Go down,
Swim through the darkness
Strange things to find there
Thought pools making their reflections
Inside your mind there.

On an earlier recording, the song's coda warned "You might lose your mind there," which was revised to the more positive "You might *find* your mind there" for the second version. The middle section—with Craig gasping in awed wonder—actually sounds like an acid trip peaking. Don Glut chuckles at that assessment: "We were just making noises. We were all yelling stuff in the background, and because of my comic book connections, if you listen you can hear me yell 'Flame on!' and 'Holy Moley!'—which are what the Human Torch and Captain Marvel used to say. I also shout 'Om-Mani-Padme-Hum!' which was the magical phrase used by the Green Lama." On the earlier demo some of the band members sing the names of their wives or girlfriends: "Fancy Nancy" in Chris' case, "Jodie Commodie" for Bobby, and "Holly everywhere" for Craig. "When we played 'Swim' during live gigs, we varied what we said during the freakout," adds Don. "When we played at the Magic Mushroom club in Studio City I sometimes gave the oath Green Lantern said while charging his power ring."

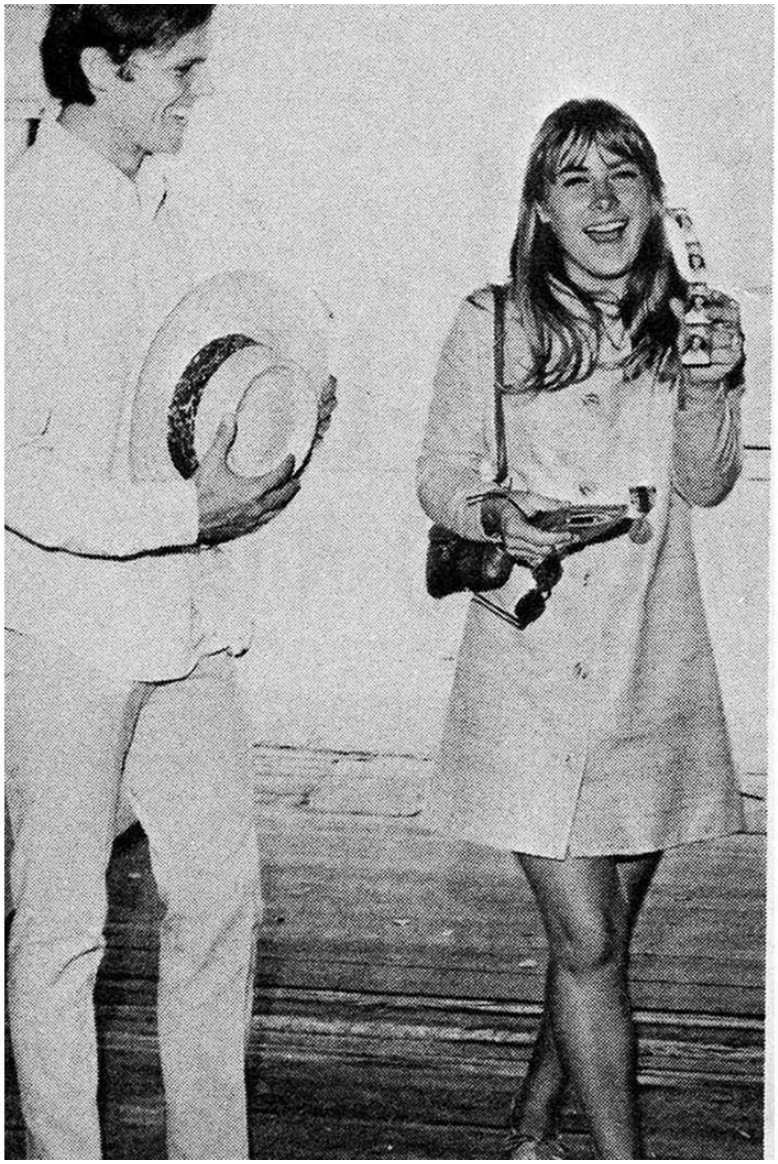
The band's sense of humor is also in evidence on "Voodoo Spell," which was to have ended the first side of the LP. The song finishes with a burst of jungle drumming followed by some brief spoken dialogue: "Listen!

The drums have stopped beating," Chris whispers fearfully in a fake English accent. "Oh, it's so quiet!" responds Craig in a girlish falsetto. "That's what I don't like about it," adds a manly John Wayne voice. "It's *too* quiet." "I suggested the 'jungle drums' ending and did the John Wayne-inspired voice," explains Don. When Craig passed a tape of the album along to Frank Zappa, Zappa scribbled a note that "'Voodoo Spell' is probably the best item on this tape." This endorsement meant so much to Craig that he reproduced Zappa's note on the back of the *Apache* album.

Side two of the album was to begin with the epic "Not the Freeze," which, impressively, was recorded in one take with no edits or splices. "By the time we got to the lengthy piece, it was already 2:00 in the morning," remembers Don. "We'd been recording all night and the hours had taken their toll. Consequently, the plan was to do a 'scratch' recording, played straight through without stopping, myriad time and tempo changes and all, with no overdubbing, and then come back another day to perform the 'real' version. We got through the track—miraculously all in one take—and walked into the control booth. There a very pleased Mike Nesmith, sitting at the control board, informed us that our performance and its recording were just fine. It was our only-ever take of 'Not the Freeze' in its expanded form and was a 'keeper.' Had I known that, I would not have, almost immediately upon reaching the end of the piece, leaned my bass guitar against its amp; you can hear a subtle 'thump' if you listen closely."

Ducey's "Love Rain," with Glut on fuzz bass, and a new recording of Smith's "Century of Distance" completed the second side of what was hoped to be the first Penny Arkade album (although Glut remembers the last two may have been designated as non-LP extras).

Had the completed *Not the Freeze* album been released, it may not have changed the world, but it would have established the Penny Arkade as a group of note, and Smith and Ducey as songwriters to be reckoned with. Especially if preceded by "Country Girl" as a single, it would most definitely have made an impact.



Craig with Ann Moses, as pictured in the December 1967 edition of *Tiger Beat*.

THE PENNY ARKADE

If you missed out when Tiger Beat intro'd the super-groovy Penny Arkade then we're giving you a first look at these handsome four. The Arkade really started with **Chris** and **Craig** who originally did a TV pilot together and found out that their personalities and talents grooved so much they had to stay together.

They headed out for the big golden State (of California) and set up equipment. Like a lot of musicians ahead of them they started the folk-singing rounds, and somehow kept running into **Mike Nesmith.** The **Monkee** was so impressed with their talents that he took them under his wing. After adding a drummer named **Denny** (from Mike's old home town in Texas), and a Bass guitarist named **Marvel** they went out and recorded a whole album.

But before the album happens the Arkade are playing some local spots around the Strip like Gazzari's and The Galaxy—keeping in practice until their first record hits and they make it big. And when you hear them, you know they **will** be up on top of the charts.

The four are always together practicing. They used to practice up in **Chris'** house which is stuck on top of some poles in the hills of Hollywood. "My roommate is **John London** of the **Lewis and Clarke Expedition,"** says **Chris.** "We used to take turns practicing up there. But all the neighbors started complaining—and then they started sending up the police. So we stopped playing there completely."

Listen for them!

Clipping inset is from the March 1968 issue of *Tiger Beat*.

12

TRANSCEND

Ciro's nightclub at 8433 Sunset Boulevard had been through several incarnations since first opening its doors in 1940. In the '40s and '50s it was the fashionable hangout for Hollywood celebrities like Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Marilyn Monroe, Frank Sinatra, Ava Gardner and Judy Garland. By the mid-'60s it was Ciro's LeDisc, hosting some of the hippest groups of the day, including the Byrds and the Leaves. In fast pursuit of the changing trends, in July 1965 it rebranded as It's Boss, its walls redecorated with oversized pop art images in the style of Roy Lichtenstein. Then, in the summer of 1967 it underwent another remake/remodel as a futuristic psychedelic hotspot complete with liquid lightshow conjured by eight slide projectors. It's Boss was reborn as Spectrum 2000.

The Penny Arkade were booked to play the grand opening on August 17th on a bill headlined, somewhat incongruously, by a Latin-flavored lounge music combo called the Unbelievables. To mark the occasion, Phyllis Nesmith arranged for the band to be picked up in a limousine so they could arrive at the club like the pop stars they were surely about to become. Spectrum 2000 was packed to the gills that night with an estimated 1,500 people crammed into a room with a listed capacity of 500. Afterwards Phyllis took the band out to celebrate at an expensive Hollywood restaurant.

As it turned out, the celebration was premature. The next day a review appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, criticizing the club ("nothing more than a Whisky-A-Go-Go East with lesser known acts"), the décor ("cribbed from the Trip, the Cheetah, and the San Francisco hippie ballrooms"), the lightshow ("routine by the standards set by most local lightshow places"),

and, most pointedly, the Penny Arkade: "…a quartet that might be good with several months of practice. Their voices, both in solos and in harmonizing, have an annoyingly sharp edge, and their playing is merely routine."

Don Glut ready for the Penny Arkade's appearance at the opening of the Spectrum 2000 club on August 17, 1967. (Photo courtesy Don Glut)

Bobby Donaho remembers them taking the review hard. "We got shot down at the Spectrum 2000. We got a bad review, man, and the heart went out of the whole thing."

Live performances clearly weren't the group's forte, so songwriting and recording remained their main focus for the time being. "We played at the Cheetah at Santa Monica once or twice," recalls Glut, "but most of our time was spent recording. I think we played at the Galaxy, we played at Gazzarri's, and we played the Magic Mushroom in Studio City"—at the same Ventura Boulevard location that had once been Larry Potter's Supper Club"—"But we really didn't want to work our way up through playing all the nightclubs. We were *so close*: we had Mike's money behind us, Mike's 'star power' and all this, and we really were very close, through that whole period, to making it big."

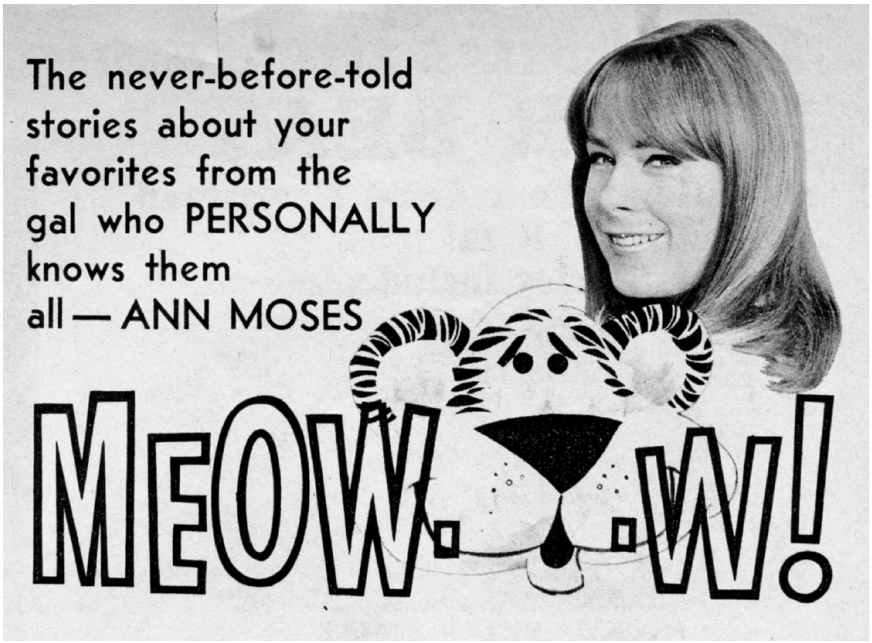
Because of their association with the Monkees, the group also began to get coverage in some of the teen magazines of the day like *16 Magazine* and *Tiger Beat*. In the autumn of '67, for example, a *16 Magazine* Monkees Special ran a piece called "A Day in the Life of Mike Nesmith," which included the following excerpt: "A leisurely evening with the Nesmiths will probably find you dining at a very fine French restaurant in Beverly Hills. After a delicious dinner, Phyllis and Mike will take you to see the Penny Arkade, a new group Mike is sponsoring—the leaders of which are two adorable boys named Chris and Craig. Tonight, the Penny Arkade is appearing at the Spectrum, one of the Sunset Strip's liveliest clubs. While you're sitting there, the 'Monkee crowd'—consisting of Davy Jones, David Pearl, Micky Dolenz, Henry Diltz and Peter Tork—comes pouring in. And the last thing you remember about a day in the life of Mike Nesmith is this fabulous high point of music, talk and friendship. The Monkee brigade has turned out to be just like you always thought they would be—a regular fun-loving gang of groovy guys."

Ann Moses was the Feature Editor of *Tiger Beat* from July 1966 until January 1968, when she became the Editor-in-Chief. Ann first introduced the Penny Arcade [sic] to *Tiger Beat* readers in the October 1967 issue in her "Meow" column, mentioning that Nesmith was producing them. The accompanying photo was of Chris and Craig only. "We only presented the Penny Arkade in *Tiger Beat* because of the connection with Mike Nesmith," she told me in October 2013. "But once I met Craig, we just hit it off as two young people around the same age."

In her December '67 column, she was pictured with Craig at the Santa Monica Pier after visiting a photo booth together. "I can't remember the

circumstances of my afternoon with Craig at the Santa Monica Pier," she says, "but the Pier is also a small amusement park. I think the two of us went down there to shoot some photos of Craig [and the band] at the—you guessed it—penny arcade, plus the famous carousel." A shot of the band on the carousel eventually appeared in the March 1968 issue. "I did love the shot of Craig with me holding our photos from a 25-cent photo booth that was also a pier attraction. He had been wearing a straw hat during the photo shoot, but I was the one wearing the hat in the photo-booth pictures. That picture really captures the Craig I got to know—fun, great sense of humor, playful and carefree."

Ann and Craig also went out on a date of sorts. "I guess it wasn't really a date as such," remembers Ann. "I just know that he called me up—both of these events were in the summer of 1967—and asked me 'out' for the evening. I honestly don't remember if we got something to eat or what. What I clearly remember is talking and laughing for a while at his place in the San Fernando Valley—I think it may have been his parents' house—and then going for a long ride over Mulholland Drive through the Santa Monica Mountains on his motorcycle. No helmets, he just told me to hang on to his waist and then he proceeded to drive fast, taking terrifying turns on the curving highway. It was dark and I vowed I would never get on another motorcycle the rest of my life. I didn't let him know how afraid I was, but I thanked God when we ended our ride safely. To him it was just a blast flying through the summer night air. More of his carefree and love-of-life demeanor. I had probably driven over to his house, as our ride was round-trip back to his house, and I imagine I drove home to Hollywood in my Pontiac Le Mans—safe with all that metal wrapped around me! That was the last time I saw Craig."



Because of their Monkees connections, the Penny Arkade landed another media showcase event in December, when they performed at the Screen Gems Christmas Party. “Sally Field was sitting at our table,” remembers Don. “She was the Flying Nun back then. We played a lot of those kinds of things rather than nightclubs.”

In early 1968 the group auditioned for an appearance on *Peyton Place*, the popular ABC-TV soap drama. “They needed a house band whose members were gonna be characters on the show,” remembers Don. “We went down to the Columbia/Screen Gems lot dressed in our blue suits. We were on a sound stage and we did a few of our better songs, and they loved us. Cocky us, we pretty much thought we’d won the gig, also taking into account Mike Nesmith’s association with Columbia/Screen Gems. I don’t think there had been any other bands trying out. Then what happened at the very last minute, someone who was like the brother-in-law of one of the people involved with the show threw a band together overnight and they got the job. Apparently they wanted somebody a little bit freakier than we were. Even though we had long hair and everything, we looked more presentable; we had these blue suits Mike bought us—I still have mine hanging in the closet, it might even still fit—so we looked more like the earlier Beatles than the Rolling Stones.”

In the end the producers put together a band called the Pillory for a recurring role on the show. In an interesting twist, their lineup included Suzannah Jordan, Chris and Craig's cast mate from *The Happeners*. The Pillory performed Boyce and Hart's "Teardrop City" along with a couple of other songs, including Suzannah's own "Castles of Sand," on an episode broadcast in June 1968.

Suzannah had continued to see Craig socially after the cancellation of *The Happeners*. She'd moved to Los Angeles and had even joined the still touring remnants of the Good Time Singers for a short time. "I hung out with Craig a lot," she remembers. "Craig used to come over on his motorcycle and I'd hop on the back and we'd fly around L.A. We would go see the La Brea Tar Pits and go to the museum over there. I just always loved hanging with him. I didn't know much about his life. He seemed to have money, didn't seem to have any problems. We'd just hang out and have fun. We went to a lot of art galleries. We hung out for quite a few years intermittently."

With Craig now earning some significant money from his songwriting, it appears he was able to help out his family. On February 15th, 1968, a notice in the *Van Nuys News* revealed that a Business Tax Certificate had been issued to Charles G. and Craig V. Smith for a business located at 17978 Ventura Boulevard in Encino. Evidently Chuck and Craig went into business together on a bar called the Buckeye Inn. What their exact business arrangement was, we don't know, but Craig later told friends that he'd bought his father a bar.

During this period Craig continued to spend a lot of time with Jason Laskay. "Craig and I used to go out every night and do something," says Laskay. "We'd go to these different parties and music industry functions. Craig got invited to a lot of that music industry stuff." Laskay remembers, for example, a publicity party at the Magic Castle in Hollywood for Kenny Rogers & the First Edition, who'd recently hit the charts with "Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)." One of Craig's Grant High School classmates, Mike Post, was producing the First Edition, and Craig also knew their manager Ken Kragen, so he was hoping to get the group to record one of his songs.

On February 10th, 1968, Craig and Jason went to see the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Electric Flag at the Shrine Auditorium. Laskay's old school

friend Mike Bloomfield was on the bill, too, with his band Electric Flag, along with Blue Cheer and Soft Machine. “I remember driving down the Hollywood freeway to the auditorium,” says Jason. “We were in Craig’s car, and we might have been with Suzanne Love and her friend Teri. We had smoked some really good grass, and all of a sudden there were two huge semi trucks on either side of us, and that car wouldn’t go any faster. It was a Volkswagen and we had four people in it, and we were all freaking out: ‘Get outta here! Go faster! We’re gonna get crushed!’ It was a typical, stoned-out paranoia thing. It was really funny, man. And that car just would *not* go any faster, and we couldn’t slow down because there were people behind us and these big semi trucks either side. We thought we were going to get crushed between these two trucks, but we made it—obviously. We saw Hendrix at the Shrine, and Mike Bloomfield was playing, and we went backstage to see Mike and I introduced him to Craig.”

CHRIS AND CRAIG of the Penny Arcade are busy at work now in the recording studio. Mike Nesmith is producing their records.

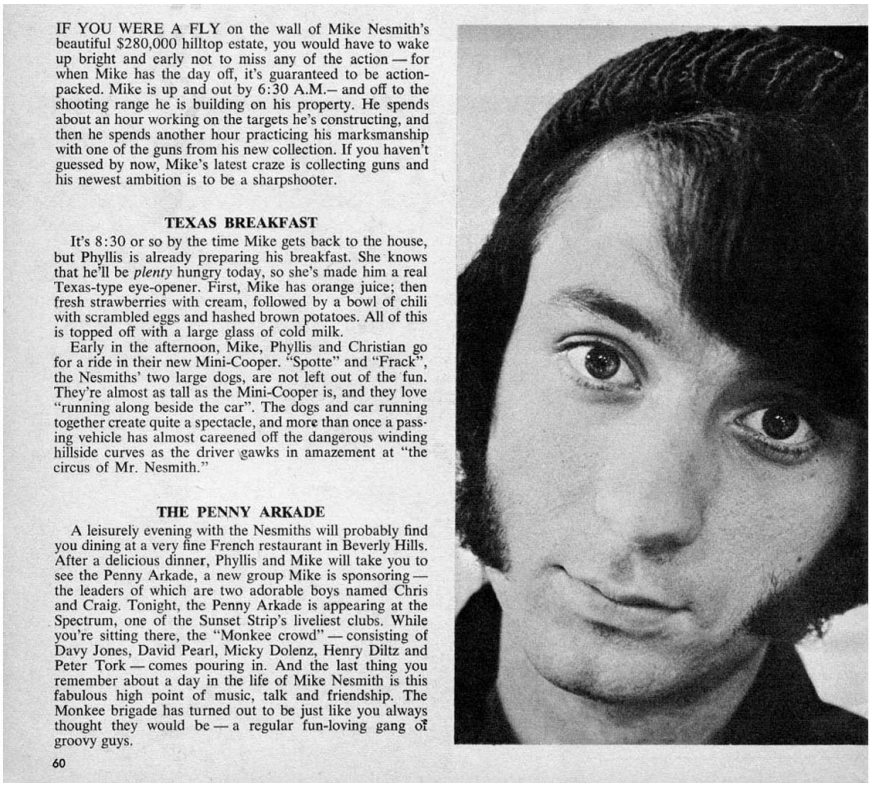
Chris and Craig in *Tiger Beat*, October 1967.

Laskay and Smith would also hang out at Frank Zappa’s house in Laurel Canyon, an elaborate roadhouse log cabin originally built for Hollywood movie cowboy Tom Mix. “Frank Zappa lived down the street from me on

the corner of Lookout Mountain and Laurel Canyon," recounts Laskay. "We used to go to parties there all the time. They had a bowling alley in their house. They had the coolest house. Houdini's house was nearby, behind a wall, and they had left it in ruins for years. We would go to Zappa's house a lot. There always seemed to be a party there and chicks," he laughs. "That got a little heavy sometimes though. Craig and I would smoke dope once in a while, but there were some big-time druggers around there. We kind of got put off by some of that. Zappa let all those people come around and have those parties, which were just a trip. His house was multi-level craziness."

There was a similar scene happening at Dennis Wilson's estate in Pacific Palisades, another log cabin mansion, this one originally owned by Will Rogers. "Dennis had a great house down in the Palisades," remembers Jason, "a lot of woods, nestled in. There were a lot of strange people around there after a while too."

Strange people like Charles Manson and his followers, who spent much of the spring and summer of '68 camped out there, mooching off the Beach Boys drummer's good will. "Craig and I got to know Manson and all those people," says Laskay. "They were just around and singing songs the same as anywhere. In those days we'd go to somebody's house, get stoned, and start jamming and singing songs: 'Here's this new song I wrote' or just playing songs that were out, a Beatles song or something. People would just sing. In those days everybody was just kind of 'cool'—you know? Your brother, sister—that whole 'peace-love' thing was a little overdone. But you'd go to parties at people's houses and there's people around, and everybody's cool because you know the same people so it's basically friendly."



IF YOU WERE A FLY on the wall of Mike Nesmith's beautiful $280,000 hilltop estate, you would have to wake up bright and early not to miss any of the action — for when Mike has the day off, it's guaranteed to be action-packed. Mike is up and out by 6:30 A.M.— and off to the shooting range he is building on his property. He spends about an hour working on the targets he's constructing, and then he spends another hour practicing his marksmanship with one of the guns from his new collection. If you haven't guessed by now, Mike's latest craze is collecting guns and his newest ambition is to be a sharpshooter.

TEXAS BREAKFAST

It's 8:30 or so by the time Mike gets back to the house, but Phyllis is already preparing his breakfast. She knows that he'll be *plenty* hungry today, so she's made him a real Texas-type eye-opener. First, Mike has orange juice; then fresh strawberries with cream, followed by a bowl of chili with scrambled eggs and hashed brown potatoes. All of this is topped off with a large glass of cold milk.

Early in the afternoon, Mike, Phyllis and Christian go for a ride in their new Mini-Cooper. "Spotte" and "Frack", the Nesmiths' two large dogs, are not left out of the fun. They're almost as tall as the Mini-Cooper is, and they love "running along beside the car". The dogs and car running together create quite a spectacle, and more than once a passing vehicle has almost careened off the dangerous winding hillside curves as the driver gawks in amazement at "the circus of Mr. Nesmith."

THE PENNY ARKADE

A leisurely evening with the Nesmiths will probably find you dining at a very fine French restaurant in Beverly Hills. After a delicious dinner, Phyllis and Mike will take you to see the Penny Arkade, a new group Mike is sponsoring — the leaders of which are two adorable boys named Chris and Craig. Tonight, the Penny Arkade is appearing at the Spectrum, one of the Sunset Strip's liveliest clubs. While you're sitting there, the "Monkee crowd" — consisting of Davy Jones, David Pearl, Micky Dolenz, Henry Diltz and Peter Tork — comes pouring in. And the last thing you remember about a day in the life of Mike Nesmith is this fabulous high point of music, talk and friendship. The Monkee brigade has turned out to be just like you always thought they would be — a regular fun-loving gang of groovy guys.

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The Penny Arkade get a plug in a *16 Magazine* Monkees special in late 1967.

After a while though, everything was not 'cool.' "Manson and those people had a weird vibe," admits Jason. "We would be there some nights and it didn't feel right so we would leave. We'd do that a lot."

By early '68, Smith and Laskay were already on more of a spiritual trip —a search for inner harmony that ran counter to the dark, discordant vibes around Dennis' house. Their shared interest in Eastern philosophy had been inspired in part by the Beatles' well-publicized association with the Maharishi, and more directly by Mike Love. Love, along with Dennis and Carl Wilson and Al Jardine, had met the Maharishi in Paris in December of 1967, and he soon became a passionate advocate for Transcendental Meditation. In February 1968 he traveled to Rishikesh, India, along with the Beatles, Donovan and Mia Farrow, to take a course in Transcendental Meditation at the Maharishi's ashram.

Love's enthusiasm for TM was contagious, and with his encouragement Smith and Laskay began reading up on the subject, along with related strands of Eastern mysticism. The Maharishi opened up a TM Center in the Westwood neighborhood of L.A., near UCLA, and Craig and Jason decided

to go there to get initiated. “We were really excited about it,” remembers Laskay. “It was kind of a new thing in life to go on this spiritual path that neither one of us had had before. So we went to Westwood where the sign-up thing was. They were doing initiations for like two days. You signed up and then they’d give you your mantra. So we stood in line and maybe we wore white or something, and we got initiated, and then it was like ‘Oh wow! Do you feel different?’

“I remember walking through Westwood afterward and we had kind of that ‘new’ feeling like ‘*Oh yeah, life is gonna change now!*’ kind of thing. It was a special day because we had a good feeling about doing that. For a day or two we were being real spiritual, chanting our tone and all that kind of thing, saying our mantras. That was a big deal for us.”

While they hadn’t expected instant enlightenment, the experience gave them a sense of well-being, like they’d taken the first step on an important spiritual journey. For Laskay that journey would continue long into the future. For Craig, though he had no way of knowing yet, the road ahead was to be shorter and more treacherous.

Chris Ducey, ca. 1968 (Photo courtesy Chris Ducey)

Melody Clinger's 21st birthday party in 1968. Craig Smith (front center), Jason Laskay (back right). (Photo courtesy Melody Clinger)

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DIAMOND WAVES REFLECT

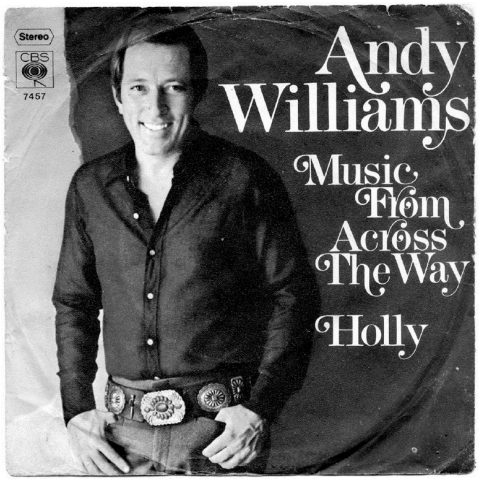
Where the crystal ocean finds the shore
Diamond waves reflect the love we shared before
Through the silence
Holly enters my mind.

By the middle of ’68, it was apparent that the Penny Arkade album was not going to be released. Nesmith recalls interest from not only Dot but also Elektra, while an article in *Tiger Beat* mentioned Buddah Records, but in the end nothing came of it. “He could’ve sold that record for $100,000 to Jac Holzman at Elektra,” remembers Bobby Donaho, “but Holzman wanted to take it and put on effects—you know, put on a synthesizer, because the Moog was happening, and do some things to it and sweeten it up. And Mike wouldn’t have any part of it. He was a purist about it. He said, ‘That’s definitely just a four-piece band and that’s it! All live except for the vocals.’”

By now the band’s association with Nesmith was fading out. The Monkees’ TV show had been canceled earlier in the year, and Nesmith was focused on other projects, including the making of *Head*. Sensing it was the end of a chapter, Craig Smith decided it was time to move on. “He came over to my place when I was living in an apartment in Hollywood,” remembers Don. “He didn’t say he was coming over. There was just a knock at the door and there was Craig. He was acting a little aloof—but then Craig was always a little aloof so there wasn’t anything special about that. He just sat down and said, ‘I’ve decided I’m leaving the band. I just wanted to let you know in person.’ And that was it.”

“He’d gotten a big royalty check, I think, for something,” remembers Chris. “And he decided to travel. It was kind of an open-ended deal, not an ‘I quit’ thing. He didn’t say how long he was going for.”

The royalty check was almost certainly for “Holly,” which Andy Williams had recorded for his album *Love, Andy*. Laskay is pretty sure he and Craig attended the recording session. Released in November 1967, the album put Craig’s name in some exalted company: it also included songs written by Brian Wilson and Tony Asher (“God Only Knows”), Burt Bacharach and Hal David (“The Look of Love”) and Bob Crewe and Bob Gaudio (“Can’t Take My Eyes Off You”). Andy’s lush, breathtakingly romantic version of “Holly” is one of the album’s highlights. *Love, Andy* spent 36 weeks on the charts, peaking at #8. On May 14th, 1968 it was certified Gold, meaning that over half a million copies had been sold. “Holly” was also released as a single in several countries (it topped out at #113 on the Billboard chart in the U.S., but reached #4 in the adult contemporary chart). Williams’ recording of “Holly” was followed by a version by Jim Pike of the Lettermen. It was released as a solo Pike single on Capitol in June 1968, and also appeared on the Lettermen’s *Goin’ Out of My Head* album.



By that time, Craig was no longer seeing Holly Mershon, the girl who had inspired the song. “I always thought it was a weird combination, him and her,” remarks Laskay. “It didn’t seem to fit.” Another chapter ended. In

1969 Holly married session guitarist Hugh McCracken. (She did not respond to requests for an interview.)

"Craig got a big check, I remember," says David Price. "He got a *very* big check, as a matter of fact. He told us about it, and off he went."

For almost five years Craig Smith had been working in the entertainment industry pretty much nonstop, never quite finding the big breakthrough he'd been looking for. One can only speculate as to his state of mind, but Craig must have felt it was time to reevaluate his goals and ambitions. He'd become deeply interested in meditation and Eastern philosophy, and, as mentioned earlier, had been experimenting with LSD.

With the Penny Arkade going nowhere, the financial windfall from "Holly" and "Salesman" offered Craig the freedom he needed to travel the world, explore new horizons and perhaps pursue a more spiritual path. It would prove to be a fateful turning point.

The decision to leave the band and travel to India and elsewhere appears to have been an impulsive one. As was so often the case, Craig did not discuss his plans with his friends until they were already in motion. "I don't think he said anything until he'd decided on his own and bought his ticket," remembers Laskay. "It's not like he asked me to come with him. *Later* he did, he said, 'Why don't you come with me and we can go together? I'm going to go to India. I'm going to do this and that…' But I had no interest in going to India. It never had any appeal to me. It did on the surface, like, *yeah, oh wow, everyone's in India*, and it looked real nice with the Beatles and the Maharishi and stuff, but India wasn't like that. I somehow knew that, because I had seen all of those pictures of them throwing dead bodies in the Ganges River, and I just thought, *man, I never wanna go there*. I think Craig dug the idea of dirty and decrepit. He kind of got into that, and I'm sure he thought it was the thing to do to gain enlightenment and just do what a songwriter should do."

"At that time in history it was kind of a cool thing to do," reflects David Price. "The Beatles had gone to the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and all that kind of thing. I've always been kind of a spiritual guy too, so I looked at it on that level and said, 'OK, he wants to go with his quest.' But that was about it, and I didn't think a whole lot about it after that until he came home, of course. I wasn't surprised that he would go off on his own because, as I say, he was very intense and he was very sort of self-sufficient

—self-... I don't wanna say self-centered; we all were self-centered. I mean if you stand onstage and do stupid stuff you're self-centered. But I remember at the time not thinking it was odd. But I didn't connect it in my mind with him being a very spiritual guy. I think I probably looked at it more as a copycat thing. 'The Beatles have gone, these other guys have gone; I'll go too.'"

There was a going-away party for Craig at Mike Love's huge rustic house in Bel-Air. Various members of the Beach Boys were there, along with Bruce Barbour, some of the Clinger sisters, and an assortment of Hollywood somebodies and nobodies. Notably absent were any of the other Penny Arkade members, or Jason Laskay. "Craig was weird sometimes with privacy stuff," Jason remarks. "He may not tell you certain things, like there was a party going on at Mike's. He may decide not to mention it for whatever reason, if he didn't see you on the day that he was telling people. He had those kinds of weird little idiosyncrasies."

Patsy Clinger remembers Craig in a gauzy white Nehru outfit, love beads, bell bottoms and sandals, jabbering excitedly amidst clouds of pot smoke about going to India to seek enlightenment with the Maharishi and other gurus. "He was going to go to India," she remembers. "He wanted to be at the feet of those he revered—that was his life now. That's what the whole experience was about, becoming more and more in tune and capable in that whole mysticism thing."

As Mormons, the Clinger family was uncomfortable with the esoteric spiritual path Craig had chosen, but also genuinely concerned for his safety while traveling. He'd be making the trip alone with a guitar and a backpack as his only luggage. "We were all concerned when he was leaving," remembers Patsy. "Because, to go on an open-ended trip to a place like that where you don't really have any connections, any protections, and it's like a new, wild, wild, crazy frontier—and only to seek to be with whatever the master was, whether it was the Maharishi or whomever."

The Clingers' concerns were not unfounded. Craig Smith's going-away party was in a very real way a last farewell to the lighthearted, outgoing, smiling person they all knew—or thought they knew. "He came back definitely tilted," says Chris Ducey quietly. "Not the same person who left."

After leaving Los Angeles, Craig stopped off in New York City where he visited Heather MacRae. Heather had relocated to New York in late 1967

and had appeared on Broadway with her new boyfriend, Walter McGinn, in *Here's Where I Belong*, a musical adaptation of *East of Eden*. The play opened—and closed—to terrible reviews on March 3rd, but soon afterwards she joined the cast of the immensely successful musical *Hair*, playing the part of Sheila. "I was living on the Upper West Side of Manhattan with Walter, and Craig came and visited us and stayed with us," she remembers. "By that time he was very much into the hippie thing; he was completely different from his All-American Andy Williams period. He looked very different: his hair was longer and he wore long robes and he was into chanting and Buddhism. He seemed a little nutty, but I didn't think he was that crazy. He would meditate and chant at the little altar and stuff. But that wasn't any crazier than anything else that was happening in those days."

While there wasn't anything especially unusual about Craig's behavior, Heather was struck by the intensity of his new beliefs. "He clearly went from being, as we all say, the golden boy, to all of a sudden becoming a Buddhist and becoming totally obsessed with it—not that that was unusual in the '60s, but he just was *obsessive* about it. It wasn't mild. He was forcing me to chant with him. 'You've gotta chant with me!' 'Wait! I don't really *want* to chant.' 'No, you *have* to, you *have* to...' He was really pushing the issue, and he was very intense about everything.

"Maybe Craig was always intense," she wonders, "but his intensity was covered over with the smiling?"

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WHERE MOST MEN FEAR TO GO

I walk where most men fear to go
I've learned things only witches know

In the late '60s many young Westerners headed out on what became known as the Hippie Trail, in search of adventure, enlightenment, and access to inexpensive, high-quality hashish. The trail began in Istanbul, Turkey. From there travelers headed east through Iran to Afghanistan, then Pakistan, and on to India—where the Beatles had famously made their spiritual pilgrimage in February 1968. From India, travelers could either head north to Kashmir, south to Bombay, Ceylon or the beaches of Goa, or northeast to the furthest outpost of the trail in Kathmandu, Nepal. All these destinations could be reached via train for next to nothing.

In October of 1968, 23-year-old Craig Smith, guitar slung over his back, joined the trail in Turkey. Information buried in the *Apache/Inca* notes suggests he arrived via Greece and Innsbruck, Austria, where he met a girl called Polly: "Under stars we drank our deep red wine" was a song lyric he attributed to that meeting. By November he was in Istanbul, where he befriended Patrick Mulcahy, an Irishman, who until recently had been working as a bookbinder in San Francisco. Smith and Mulcahy were having dinner one day at the Pudding Shop, a popular hangout for European and American travelers, when they were joined at their table by two young women from North Dakota: Mary Hurly and Ann Dignan. Mary's first impression of Craig was that he seemed "incredibly cool," dressed in jeans and a turtleneck, his neck adorned with love beads, a "stereotypical hippie" with "a striking pair of eyes." "He was quiet and contemplative," she

remembers. “He had dirty-blondish hair, carried a guitar and wore a sheepskin coat. During the course of our conversation Craig explained the presence of his guitar, telling us he was a singer who had been in a group called the Good Time Singers, and had appeared frequently on *The Andy Williams Show*. No mention, to the best of my recollection, was made of his songwriting career.”

“He dressed differently,” remembers Ann. “He had a long Afghan coat with sheep or goat fur on the inside, it was dirty white, and he wore a purse slung sideways across one shoulder to the hip. I think that’s where he carried all his ID and money and stuff. And he had a guitar case, and long, wild, wispy hair that probably never saw a comb.”

After talking for a while, Craig and Patrick revealed that they had plans to travel overland to Delhi in a van owned by a Greek fellow named Constantine. “Connie had purchased an old VW van while visiting his family in Greece,” remembers Mary. “He was taking it back to Australia, where he was currently living, and needed riders to share expenses. As luck would have it, there was just enough room for two more. We signed up on the spot.”

Mary and Ann, both 23, paired off with Craig and Patrick respectively, and a couple of days later, set off on the trail for India in Connie’s van. “Looking back on it, I don’t know how all five of us crammed into that old VW van because Constantine had tons of stuff,” says Ann. “We always figured he was smuggling something, but we weren’t interested in knowing. That was *his* business. He had, to my knowledge, a very limited understanding of English. In fact the four words I mainly remember from him were: ‘Fucking *idiot*!’ and ‘Bloody bastard!’”

“We were excited beyond description,” continues Mary. “Unfortunately, our elevated spirits were quickly crushed when just a few short hours later, as we rolled into Ankara, the van broke down. And the bad news kept coming. It seems the part needed to put the rubber back on the road would take days to arrive. Connie felt terrible and suggested we go on without him. We weren’t really sure what to do since we were counting on being driven to India as planned and it was hard to adopt a different mindset. As we stood around looking lost, one of the mechanics approached a couple of Turkish truckers who were headed in the same direction we were planning on going, and asked whether we could ride along in the back of their truck.

When they agreed, all hesitation dissolved and a few minutes later, off we went. I couldn't help feeling sorry for Connie, but something told me I would see him again. And indeed, months later I actually noticed him on a crowded street in New Delhi—sort of like that guy in *Mad* magazine whose face pops up all the time no matter where, no matter when, no matter what; the 'What? Me worry?' guy."

This stage of their journey, in the back of a truck carrying olive oil or similar, turned out to be extremely uncomfortable. The weather had turned brutally cold, especially at night. "It was freezing-ass cold," confirms Mary, "as the only space available to us, after all, was in the open air. But, hey, beggars can't be choosers. Since there were tarps back there covering their wares, we quickly chose to seek shelter under them as well. This helped a lot. Between the tarps, body heat and regular stops for hot chai and hot meals, we survived a couple of long days and an equal amount of extremely long, black as hell nights."

"Probably my clearest memory of Craig," remembers Ann, "is him sitting in the back of that truck with his guitar and his nice warm coat. He was on top, outside the tarp facing backwards, and we were huddled down below facing him, and it was like 'Wow! What are we *doing*?' I don't know if any of us knew where we were going except we were 'going to India' and it was 'the Hippie Trail' and the Beatles had been there and the Maharishi…"

When the truck reached its destination, the four of them hopped on a bus to continue their journey east. "Within a few days we were crossing into Iran, which was still safe at that point," recounts Mary. "In fact, Iran was actually still in a 'Golden Age' as far as Americans were concerned. The Shah was in power, oil was flowing and much of Tehran was Westernized. Women were free to wear what they wanted, although in the more congested areas—obviously where people of limited means lived—they were hidden by custom behind the veil. The modernized downtown area of Tehran was obviously where the money was. There one found extravagant restaurants and lavish nightclubs. We explored the city for some time and, after a few days, once more headed east, but this time by train, stopping in small towns along the way."

Mary Hurly, Craig Smith's travel companion on his journey through Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan in 1968. (Photo courtesy Mary Hurly)

By now Mary had gotten to know Craig a lot better. "Craig and I were very different," she reflects. "I came from a college background and was making the trip as a cultural journey. Craig was on more of a spiritual journey. He was very quiet and focused on meditation and music. And he definitely had a head start on every one of us when it came to taking drugs. In fact, he had brought a huge supply of LSD with him, a substance which I had only read about, and he took it on a regular basis."

Mary remembers that Craig was very much obsessed with music, especially the Beatles. He would play their songs, and his own, for an hour or more each night before they all went to sleep. "He had a very melodious voice," she remembers. "It was filled with conviction and power. He played guitar and sang every night, followed by a period of meditation in the traditional lotus posture. He was obsessed with getting to India. I'm guessing that, as he was such a devotee of the Beatles, who had embraced

some sort of Indian holy man, that he had taken up that same cause in devotion to them. Not to mention that as a diehard musician he would have had to be fascinated with those centuries-old sitars and other instruments, and learning to play them must have been a lure. I do remember that Craig wanted to live in one of their complexes when he reached India—which was the last thing I would have wanted to do!"

One night in a small hotel or hostel in one of the towns along the route, Craig began to play "I Am the Walrus." "It was as if he was the only one in the room," Mary recalls. "When he reached the chorus of 'coo coo ca CHOO' he became very intense. By the third chorus, he was singing as if he was in Shea Stadium. Suddenly there was a pounding on the door. Patrick opened it and there stood an exasperated and exhausted Afghan pointing to his watch. It was eight o'clock and apparently way past his bedtime. So we apologized, which I assume the man understood from our attempts to bow and look sorry, and the guitar was put away."

Their journey along the Hippie Trail continued over the next couple of weeks. "After a total of about two or two-and-a-half weeks we arrived into Afghanistan," relates Mary. "The first town we came to was Herat. It was like stepping backwards several centuries. Not that the entire Middle East isn't seriously steeped in old traditions, but in Afghanistan it seemed to be times ten. There the women on the street were all totally hidden from view beneath burkas. Black burkas. *Hot* black burkas—as in almost no air to breathe. The men had the run of the streets and the tea shops. Since the men were plainly visible I couldn't help but notice that in relation to all other men we had seen, either in Turkey or in Iran, the Afghans in the cities we visited were quite tall, had much lighter skin, and wore turbans and baggy pants. Seeing someone with blue eyes or red hair wasn't out of the realm of possibilities either. All the shopkeepers, innkeepers, restaurant workers, as well as people in the various bazaars, were extremely accommodating to us despite Ann and myself being dressed in jeans. I suppose since so many Westerners were exploring the region, they were actually used to them, and since we were transient we didn't need to be whipped into shape."

"I loved Afghanistan," adds Ann. "It was a wonderful place. Iran and Turkey were really repressed, ugly, horrible places. The women were invisible, the men wore either brown or black, or brown *and* black, and nobody ever smiled. You couldn't walk down the street. I understood after

the trip was over that we totally violated all of their morals or ethics with our appearance. We were European females traveling, unaccompanied by family, with other males, and we wore pants and didn't cover our faces. So it was really unpleasant. Every bathroom had holes cut out where the peepers could observe whatever was going on in the bathrooms, showers or toilets. Always being groped as you walked down the street... But in Afghanistan they were smiling and they wore *colors* and were pleasant. Or at least they didn't grope you or peer at you as you went to the bathroom. But their women were completely covered with chadris, and peered through this little cloth latticework. We knew nothing about the cultures, and they probably knew nothing about us except for there was a stream of white Europeans crossing overland from basically Turkey to Delhi. You were always meeting people and it was always word-of-mouth for places to stay and so on."

"Besides the obvious physical differences between the people of Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, there were many other things that stood out," remembers Mary. "In Herat, taxicabs had been in part replaced by horse-drawn carriages, the horses colorfully adorned with elaborate headdresses dripping in bells. Everything chimed as they pranced down the street. Buses were wooden and made in the shape of a box with an open second story for your sheep or goat or whatever else you were bringing along. They were also used for the inevitable overflow of passengers. Also we noticed that no one ducked down to avoid the wind. Instead they seemed to love facing it head-on, turbans and baggy pants notwithstanding. Besides, the men were so skilled at wrapping their headgear that I doubt whether even a strong wind could blow their turbans off. Another distinguishing feature of these unusual but charming relics was the paintings of harem dancers which adorned their sides—which I found rather hilarious, considering the place in society that women there were relegated to. But, hey, a man could dream, right? All buses were manned by two employees, one who did the driving and another who sat in the passenger seat completely open to the outside. That way his job, which was to quickly exit the bus and hand-crank it up so that it could run, was made much easier. Once the old bus was up and running, down the streets it would rumble, sounds of the old '*ooga, ooga*' squeeze horns warning other pedestrians and sometimes their donkeys of its approach. It was totally amazing."

The four Americans soon adapted to this new, exotic environment. “On our first day of browsing the shops in Herat, Craig and Patrick discovered that one of the products for sale was hashish. So naturally the guys were now more interested in purchasing some of that over more sheepskin. I suppose they had quickly decided that it was part of the larger rich cultural experience. So chopping chunks off of the block and stuffing them into a pipe became a new part of Craig’s nightly routine. But he didn’t smoke alone: Patrick and Ann were eager to try it out as well. I was not eager to get into the dope scene, but I did eventually experiment later, in Kabul, since by that time I had had plenty of time to study the reaction it had on people that smoked it and it didn’t appear to be too dangerous.”

As well as smoking copious amounts of hashish out of a pipe he’d bought in the marketplace, Craig continued to dip into the stash of LSD he carried in his shoulder purse. “One night he begged me to take a tab,” Mary recalls. “I was really afraid, and was also not in the habit of bowing to peer pressure, but I finally relented. Nothing happened and I couldn’t have been happier.”

Smith also continued his nightly ritual of meditating for one hour in the lotus position before going to bed. “He tried again and again, also unsuccessfully, to get me to meditate,” remembers Mary. “However, one morning he told me that he had awakened in the middle of the night only to see me sitting in a lotus position, meditating. It obviously was a delusion but he was very pleased. Truth be told, what made the whole experience on the Hippie Trail for me had nothing to do with drugs, sex, rock and roll or meditation—it was what I was learning about these ancient cultures; their religious practices, food, customs and jewelry was what really excited me. So in many ways I suppose I wasn’t really a ’60s kind of woman. Yes, I was in that I wanted freedom and choices never available to young people before—and, hey, birth control pills had only recently hit the market so those options were now available for the first time without worry. But I was neither a California girl at the time or one that needed to find myself while simultaneously drifting through an altered state. Instead, I was merely a seeker of concrete experiences. Craig was a seeker of the abstract.”

From Herat, they eventually made their way southeast to Kandahar. From there, they planned to travel to Kabul. But at the last minute Craig

elected to stay a few more days in Kandahar and catch up with the others later. It turned out to be the most fateful decision of his life.

"The night before Patrick, Ann and I left for Kabul, we had all gone to a musical event together," recounts Mary. "I don't even know how we heard about it, but I am guessing someone indicated it to Craig, since he always carried his guitar everywhere. The concert was in a small room and everyone was squatting on their chairs, something that I was just getting used to since normally we sit on them." "It was a smoke shop," remembers Ann. "Everyone was using hookahs."

"It was an incredible evening," continues Mary. "The male musicians were all in a semicircle on the floor in the front of the room playing instruments I had never seen or heard before. Everything about the music was 180 degrees different than ours, but it was amazing. Craig was especially enamored with it. The next morning he told me he wasn't coming with us, but would join us in Kabul a few days later. I assumed he wanted to see more of this marvelous music."

So Mary, along with Ann and Patrick, left for Kabul without Craig. There they waited for him in a hotel, the agreed meeting place. He never showed so they continued on their journey, eventually making it all the way to India and Nepal. Whenever they'd run into other travelers along the trail they'd ask if they'd heard anything about the whereabouts of an American guy named Craig. It wasn't until several months later, when Mary and Ann returned to Kabul, that they finally got word of what might have happened to him.

"I ran into some people and asked about him and they said they'd heard about this American named Craig who went crazy," remembers Ann. "The rumor I heard was that he was hallucinating on LSD and went running through the market with a knife, threatening people or being threatened, and then just disappeared into insanity."

"The details that they gave were sketchy," elaborates Mary, "but they mentioned seeing Craig in a marketplace in Kandahar looking over the fruit. Then suddenly he had grabbed a knife and gone after a vendor in one of the stalls. Apparently this action provoked an immediate reaction from the man's friends. The tables turned, and the last thing they saw was fruit, turbans and men flying, and Craig running for his life up over a couple of

distant hills, then disappearing over a ridge with the men still in hot pursuit."

There is no definitive account of what happened next, but apparently Craig was badly beaten and left for dead. He later described being severely beaten by a group of men who then urinated on him. In another account, he said he was then kidnapped, drugged and raped repeatedly over a period of several days. Miraculously, he survived, but spent some time afterwards in a hospital there. "Nobody seemed to know what had happened to him after that," says Ann. "Was he institutionalized? Did he end up at the embassy? How did he get out? There was no consulate in Kandahar, only Kabul."

What is known for certain is that after this nightmarish experience, Craig Smith was never the same. Quite possibly, in addition to the mental trauma, he suffered a severe concussion and permanent brain injury, triggering his subsequent mental illness.

Craig had never displayed any psychotic or violent tendencies prior to this incident. The knife incident was, by the reckoning of everyone who knew him, completely out of character. It's quite possible he grabbed the knife in self-defense if he feared he was about to be robbed or assaulted. That fear could have been real or imagined. It's almost certain he was under the influence of LSD and hashish at the time, which would have amplified his paranoia considerably. Either way, the consequences of the attack were devastating and permanent.

Mary, who now works in the psychiatric field, suspects that Craig may have had a preexisting psychiatric disorder that could have been triggered by the trauma of the attack combined with the drugs he was using. "I wouldn't be at all surprised, now that I have more years of experience behind me in psych, that he may have been a budding schizophrenic," she reflects. "Schizophrenia typically presents in a man's late teens, early twenties. They begin to get more isolative, draw into themselves and find it difficult to maintain relationships. They often think that people are following them or intend to kill them, which is perhaps why he grabbed the knife, intending to strike first—if it actually happened that way. But it all fits. I don't think that the LSD helped at all. It would have made things worse as it obviously also distorts reality."

Mary and Ann returned to the States in April 1969. In the years since, Mary had often wondered about Craig's fate, and carried a certain amount

of guilt too, wondering if she was to blame because she had left him behind in Kandahar.

"I am relieved to have a clearer picture of what actually happened between myself and Craig Smith," she wrote me in 2003, "and a small idea of just what might have happened to him. It is good for me to know that I wasn't that brain-dead as to have walked away from someone who just didn't manage to come back to a hotel room. I have always wondered what had become of him, but had felt that LSD had played a large part in whatever caused him to snap on that occasion in Afghanistan since I know for a fact that he was dosing himself with it regularly. Whatever the circumstances, it seems that after he ran up over that hill in Kandahar he became someone else."

What happened immediately after the attack on Craig in Kandahar is not clear. Given his injuries and his mental state, it seems unlikely that his journey down the Hippie Trail continued beyond Afghanistan—but it may have. India had been his stated destination when he left the States, and he later claimed to have been there.

Hal Kant, Craig's lawyer since the Good Time Singers days, appears to have had a role in getting Craig out of his dire situation in Kandahar and back home to Los Angeles. It was through Kant that word filtered back to the States about Craig's fate.

In December 1968, Michael and Sally Storm were in Kant's office taking care of some business. They hadn't seen or heard from Craig in a couple of years, but his name came up in a most unexpected way. "Hal Kant told us that Craig had been beaten and robbed in Afghanistan," remembers Sally. "We hadn't known that he was even out of the country, but Hal Kant told us that he had been found in an insane asylum in Afghanistan."

An insane asylum in Afghanistan. The Storms confirm that these were the exact words Kant used. "I know Hal Kant said 'insane asylum,' because the idea of an Afghani insane asylum was such a horrifying concept I never forgot it," says Sally. "Had he said 'hospital' I would have had a very different reaction. He said that Craig had no idea who he was, or what had happened to him. I don't think Hal ever told me how Craig came to be released, if he regained his memory there or if someone identified him."

15

COMPLEX MESSIAH

I'll become a mystic man
And I will make a sacred plan
Of portents and a secret phrase
You'll return, love will stay.

When Craig Smith returned to the States in late 1968 or early 1969, one of the first people he called was Jason Laskay. Laskay, naturally, was happy to hear from his friend, and invited him over. "I was really excited to see him," recalls Jason. "Like 'Craig's back! I can't wait to see what's been going on.' It seemed like a while that I didn't see him—six months maybe? Then as soon as I saw him…"

He pauses to gather his thoughts, reliving the moment.

"He was *trying* to be the same," he continues, "you know, light and happy and airy. But he was just freaked-out and weird. He had this *density* about him. There was something really out of balance with this guy. He was doing this thing, swaying back and forth a lot and, like, 'Hey! How's it going, maaan?' Then he'd start on about India, and it was weird."

Craig's appearance was different, too. He had grown a scruffy beard, his hair was long and unkempt, and his clothes—including a now ever-present Afghan coat—were grubby. "He had that smell of oils and incense and like India crud, you know?" Laskay continues. "He definitely had that 'I've been in India' smell to him. Everything was, I recall, always dirty—his clothes and his shoes. I remember him wearing sandals and he had dirty feet. He looked like he was living on the street, although I think he drove

his car the first couple times I saw him. I knew he was getting weird because of the way he was talking and—*being*. It was just uncomfortable."

It's interesting that Smith talked to Laskay and others about being in India, because after the events in Kandahar it seems unlikely he would have had the means or the motivation to continue his journey. Whether Craig Smith ever made it to India or not appears to be one of the many unknowable facts that complicate the telling of his story. In all likelihood, Craig just preferred to let people believe he'd reached that destination, and there, presumably, found some of the enlightenment he had been seeking. India was part of a mystique he was starting to fabricate around himself, a mystique that may have been a sort of armor to protect him not only from the forces of reality that were pressing in on him from outside, but to contain the seething turmoil raging inside him.

The man who had once been Craig Vincent Smith had been crushed, smashed, and broken. To disconnect himself from the appalling reality of what had happened to him in Kandahar he needed to create a new persona.

In the 1972 film *The Ruling Class*, Peter O'Toole's character, Jack Gurney, believes himself to be Jesus Christ. Asked how he arrived at this realization, he explains, "Simple. When I pray to Him I find I am talking to myself."

Craig Smith must have arrived at a similar conclusion.

It could be argued that all spiritual belief systems are merely man's attempt to give some kind of meaning to the essential chaos of the universe around him. The elaborate belief system Craig constructed was similarly a means of providing some sense of order and meaning to the swirling chaos within his mind, a disorder or disarray that can possibly be attributed to undiagnosed schizophrenia, likely triggered by the head trauma he'd received from that terrifying attack in Afghanistan.

The messiah or savior complex is a delusion often reported in patients suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. Craig's may have been a classic case of this affliction. It's only a few short steps from "the kingdom of heaven is within you" to, as Craig later proclaimed, "*Christ is Me and no one else.*"

In 1969 Craig Smith no longer existed. Studio City Craig, Class President Craig, Good Time Singer Craig, Christmas Holiday Craig, Froggie Craig, Craig the Happener, Chris & Craig, Doodletown Piper-

dating Holly-enters-my-mind Craig, Penny Arkade Craig, the Craig his friends and family had all known—gone.

In his place, someone called Maitreya Kali.

In Buddhist philosophy, Maitreya is the next Buddha, prophesied to come to Earth, achieve total enlightenment and lead people into the new age. Maitreya is also a prominent figure in Theosophical literature, a Christ-like New Age prophet. In her 1888 magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrin*e, Madame Blavatsky described Maitreya as "the last Messiah who will come at the culmination of the Great Cycle." "*Bow to Maitreya,*" the man who was once Craig would write on his album cover. "*Christ is Back. Right On! Schedule … Christ is Me and no one else.*"

As Jason Laskay remembers, the name change began as soon as Craig returned from the East. "As far as I remember, it was right away: 'My new name is Maitreya.' I just thought, you know: now he's been to India so he's got an Indian name, but it still was the weirdest thing and I would still call him Craig, because I couldn't relate to Maitreya."

Laskay's understandable refusal to play along with the name game annoyed Craig. "Don't *call* me that!" he'd fire back at Laskay. "I'm *not* Craig!"

In Craig's more lucid moments, though, he was able to convey some information about what had happened to him. "There were times when he would be a little more present about what was going on, and I had an opportunity to ask him, 'What's going on? Why are you acting kind of strange?' I would try and tell him, 'Craig, you're being really weird and confrontational. What is going on? I didn't do anything to make you act like this toward me.' He'd go, 'Yeah, you're right.'

"I remember after he got back it was impossible to be around him for any length of time," he continues, "but there were a couple of times where I managed to sit and talk to him and he told me some more of the stories of what had happened to him. That's when he told me that he'd been raped and kidnapped in India and all these horrible things happened to him. He was talking about it like it was horrible, but trying to laugh it off, you know? I didn't know what to say to him. I felt bad for him, but I was ill-equipped to do anything except tell him I was really sorry and ask if there was anything I could really do for him. But he was like, 'No. It's cool.'"

In these moments of clarity, Craig acknowledged that the ordeal in Kandahar—or India as he told it—had been the tipping point for his state of mind. “In his saner moments he told me the major cause of him flipping out was this kidnapping and sexual abuse that he went through,” confirms Laskay. “Somehow he related it to his becoming disturbed. There was some logic of that happening to him and then the Maitreya thing coming, and then his enlightenment. It made some sense inside him. That’s how he was trying to explain it. But he was explaining it from the point of view of ‘I’m now this savior person.’”

Shortly after his return to Los Angles, Craig stopped by Mike Nesmith’s house where he spent a few hours with Phyllis Nesmith, Bruce Barbour and Patsy Clinger. Barbour noticed right away that Craig had changed. “He wasn’t the same guy,” remembers Bruce. “It was like somebody had kidnapped Craig. It was a complete body-snatchers kind of deal. He wasn’t the ‘Hey, how are ya?’ kind of guy anymore. Instead he just sat down and kind of went away, crossed his legs, but in a really hard yoga pose that breaks your knees—that seated lotus position—and he’d sit like that for hours. Now that I think about it, maybe it was just a way of not being involved, not having people ask him anything or include him in something.”

Patsy remembers the encounter was awkward and upsetting. Craig—Maitreya—tried to convince them of his mystical powers. Every time one of them would move their arm, cross their legs, or stand up and walk across the room, he would say in a hushed voice, “See! *I* made you do that!”

It would have been comical if he hadn’t been so serious and persistent about it. “It was sad,” says Patsy. “I was just thinking, ‘Wow! I sure hope he gets back to normal!’ because we had heard either prior or that day that he had been beaten and robbed and left for dead—or something like that. All kinds of stories. So to see him...”

On this occasion at least, Craig didn’t appear dirty or disheveled at all. “He looked ‘good’,” remembers Patsy. “He didn’t look like a homeless person by any means. He looked clean. He was in one of his Nehru outfits.”

Craig (center) chats with guests at Melody Clinger's wedding reception in August 1969. (Photo courtesy Melody Clinger)

Certainly Craig looked clean and well-groomed when he was a guest at the wedding of Melody Clinger and Jim Bell in August 1969. Two photos snapped at the reception show Craig, bearded but with his hair neatly combed, dressed in an embroidered blue velvet Nehru tunic with matching trousers and leather sandals, a small leather satchel slung casually over his shoulder. He looks relaxed and happy, and there's no suggestion anything is amiss.

"Knowing Craig the way I did, it would not surprise me if the attack alone in itself—never mind if there was any head injury—was enough to send him over the edge," theorizes Barbour. "Because he was all about peace and love, and had never encountered anything like that before. That would have been such a betrayal to him that it might very well have been an awakening that he didn't want to deal with. I kind of think that Craig, because he had such a personality, had never had a conflict with anybody. If

I had to guess, I'd say he never had anything but acceptance from anyone he met his entire life. He was personable, attractive, talented—everybody loved him. I really think that attack had to be a turning point. I think if somebody beat him up he would've been just so astounded that it may well have turned his head around. It wouldn't necessarily have taken an injury to the brain to make that a huge incident."

The personality turnaround was absolute, like the photo negative Craig would choose for the cover of his *Apache* album: white became black, love became hate, peace became violence, that winning smile a grimace of malevolence or a rictus of defeat.

"The change in him was astounding," says Barbour sadly. "He was charismatic, handsome, intelligent, talented—he had it *all*. So it's just a heartbreaker what happened to him."

The Penny Arkade had continued for a short time in Craig's absence. In the second half of '68 Mike Nesmith had produced some more demos with Dave Turner on lead guitar. When that lineup fizzled, Ducey, Glut and Donaho joined forces with three of the Texas transplants: Davy Jones' stand-in David Price, who played rhythm guitar, John "Toad" Andrews on lead, and Bob Arthur, who switched off with Don Glut on bass and Hammond B3 organ. The three Texans had all played together back in Austin in the Chelsea, and had been rehearsing together at Nesmith's place for some time with Bobby Donaho on drums. They'd been hoping to steal Donaho away from the Penny Arkade, but Bobby's sense of loyalty, and his belief in the songwriting of Chris and Craig, had prevented him from jumping ship. After Craig left, though, Nesmith suggested the two groups merge under a new name, Armadillo.

Armadillo was an odd mix of characters and styles. Ducey, the only real songwriter in the group, had a strong pop sensibility, while the Texans were pushing for a heavier, blues-based sound. In the end they played a bit of both, a compromise that didn't always work. "It was a good band," maintains Price. "We were definitely louder and harder-edged than Penny Arkade because John and Bob and I were more rock & roll and blues-oriented. We played louder. We played pretty loud. As a matter of fact we played *very* loud!"

Don Glut and Phyllis Nesmith, 1968. (Photo courtesy Don Glut)

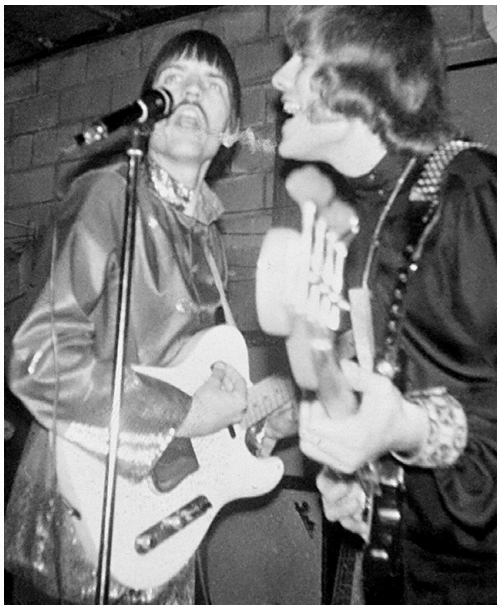
"Our image changed from being this pseudo-Beatles/Monkees type of group, where we were all individual personalities and it was kind of a happy image, to suddenly these serious old-time rockers, with our roots in various places," says Glut. "The only roots we had before were in our hair, but now we had the musical roots."

Armadillo worked the L.A. club scene for several months, including a residency at Pier 7 in Van Nuys and another at a German restaurant in Encino, the Hofbräu. "We did a great version of 'Hey Joe' that David Price sang the lead on," says Don, "I remember to this day it was like the most electrifying moment we ever had in that club was playing 'Hey Joe.' We had smoke bombs going off and everything, it was just incredible."

Don remembers seeing Craig a few times after he returned. Craig even brought him back a gift from his travels, a hashish or opium pipe, which Glut later used as a prop in one of his movies. "After Craig came back I hung out with him a little bit. Craig got invited to the opening party of a women's clothing store. I said, 'Hey, there'll be lots of girls there.' But there weren't a lot of girls there, and there wasn't a lot of food there either."

Glut quickly sensed that all was not quite right with Smith. The gears in his mind were starting to slip. "He was just getting very strange," he recalls. "When we went to that party he would say things that would be kind of

insulting to people and very condescending. He'd had a tendency before to be condescending, but not like that. He reminded me of the old expression about a keg of dynamite with the fuse ready to go off. And then [later] I heard the story of him putting somebody's eye out or something, and I decided it was just better not to have anything to do with him."



The Armadillo, 1968. Photo on left shows David "Spider" Price and Don Glut.

Bob Arthur, Don Glut, Chris Ducey, Bobby Donaho. (Photos courtesy Don Glut)

The Armadillo broke up in 1969. “A couple of things were happening,” explains Don. “One was that Mike wasn’t so financially well off anymore because the Monkees was coming to an end. I think he owed back taxes. And so the writing was starting to go up on the wall. And then I got a call from Chris one day I’ll never forget. He fired me because he thought I was too much of a disruptive force in the band. I had too many things that I complained about and wanted to do. The hair, everything—I was always fighting against having haircuts. Finally he said he thought I was creating too much of a disruption. But then what happened was that the band just fell apart. Not because I left, but because all these other things were going on. Losing Craig was a major part of it. Mike having the income tax problems was another part of it. It was like everything was winding down.”

Soon after Don’s firing, John Andrews and Bob Arthur departed for San Francisco to join Tracey Nelson’s Mother Earth, while Bobby Donaho returned to Texas where he formed a new group, Ginger Valley, which released one single on International Artists in 1970. His last contact with Craig was that year. “I had recorded ‘Country Girl’ with a band I was playing with in Houston, Ginger Valley,” explains Bobby. “I called him and asked him if it was OK. He said, ‘Sure!’ He sounded normal. It was like instant familiarity. I’ve heard these stories about him, but I’m not sure what to believe.”

Ginger Valley, ca. 1969, with Bobby Donaho (center). (Photo courtesy Peter Buesnel)

Don occasionally saw Chris Ducey and Mike Nesmith socially. In fact, after the Armadillo split, Mike produced a session for one of Don's instrumental compositions, "A Walk in the Park," with Don on keyboards, Shorty Rogers on trumpet, Bobby Donaho on drums, Mike on guitar and a forgotten bass player. Soon afterwards Don returned to his first love, filmmaking, going on to become a prolific writer and director. As a writer, he's best-known for his novelization of *The Empire Strikes Back* in 1980. More obscure, but of greater relevance here is his 2010 vampire novel, *Brother Blood*. Set in Los Angeles in the late '60s, the story concerns a suave but vicious black vampire and his foxy female minions who prey on the denizens of the Sunset Strip. Part of the story is narrated by Glut's *Freakout on Sunset Strip* persona, Mick Rogers, and the Penny Arkade make a brief appearance in a psychedelic night club scene, as do the Wicks and Armadillo. Glut wrote the book's original manuscript in 1969, not long after the Penny Arkade broke up, but revised it in the early 2000s before it finally found a publisher.

“The last time I saw Craig would’ve been 1977,” he says. “I went to a revival screening of *The War of the Worlds*. Producer George Pal and star Ann Robinson and a lot of people to do with the movie were there. It was on Hollywood Boulevard, and I saw Craig standing out there by himself, talking to somebody, and I just turned around and hoped he wasn’t going to recognize me. That was the last time I ever saw him.”

16

CHERYL, LET ME TAKE YOU BY THE HAND

Here by you, life is grand
We make two people in love
Peace is our plan.

Craig's old friends could clearly see the disturbing changes manifesting themselves in his personality, and without exception they backed away and cut all ties. However, Craig continued to forge new relationships with people he'd never met before who had no gauge that his strange behavior was anything but harmless eccentricity. At the time there was no shortage of wide-eyed—or wild-eyed—young seekers proselytizing various brands of New Age mysticism, especially in Los Angeles.

And so it was that in late 1969 Craig began an intense romantic relationship with an attractive blonde he later called "Astral Projection Personified" and his "Supreme Feminin [sic] Queen," a 23-year-old college graduate and part-time model from Pasadena called Cheryl Knickelbein. It would be the last meaningful relationship he ever had.

I contacted Cheryl—who has since changed her name to Cheryl Starsong—at her home on the big island of Hawaii where she works as a Vedic Astrology counselor. After some initial hesitation she agreed to talk to me about this strange and sometimes disturbing chapter in her life.

"I was living in North Hollywood with Inger, a Norwegian friend of mine," recalls Cheryl, "and she had a boyfriend that was in the music industry and Craig was a friend of his. He came over to the apartment and that's how I first met him. It would have been maybe the mid-fall of 1969."

Craig and Cheryl bonded deeply through their shared interest in meditation and Eastern philosophy. “It was quite a cosmic connection that we had,” she explains. “I found that when I was meditating I would tune in to him. When I was with him the energy would shift real radically; we had a connection. It was sort of transported to some other zone. At first we just talked but we had kind of a telepathic connection. I can’t remember how it became more romantic, because it was a pretty unusual relationship.”

When the couple first got together Craig was living again with his parents in Studio City. Cheryl went over there several times and remembers the atmosphere was tense. “His father really didn’t come out very much,” she remembers. “Craig seemed to have deep-seated resentment and hate toward his father. His mother struck me as someone who was an alcoholic or something. I don’t know if she was, but there was something that wasn’t altogether healthy in the situation. I didn’t know exactly what it was.”

Toward the end of the year, the situation reached a boiling point. Craig and his father got into a heated argument that may have turned physical. Craig didn’t share any details with Cheryl about the incident. “I remember there was a fight,” she says. “I was informed about that. He mentioned it, but I don’t know that I gave it a lot of credence or had any conclusions—I was young at the time so I might not have scrutinized what that was all about the way I might today. But Craig could be in this real cosmic place and all of a sudden switch into something that was bizarre and scary—but it was a while before I saw that side.”

Cheryl Knickelbein. (Photo courtesy Cheryl Starsong)

After the fight, Craig moved out of his parents' house and into a small studio apartment a couple of blocks from North Hollywood Park. Soon afterwards, Cheryl moved in with him. "I think it was in December [1969] that I moved in with him," she remembers. "It was an upstairs apartment and we'd go for walks in the park nearby. We also went to bookstores and read a lot, and meditated for hours daily. I was in an exploratory mood toward my life journey at the time. I continued to make money as a fashion model, with a break during my time with Craig, but was actually struggling with the existential questions of meaning, value and creativity."

As the apartment had no kitchen, the couple would head out every night in Craig's Volkswagen to eat at one of the city's vegetarian or health food restaurants like the Inn of the Seventh Ray in Topanga Canyon or The Source on Sunset Boulevard, run by Father Yod (a.k.a. James Baker or Ya Ho Wa) and his cult of followers, the Source Family. The type of mysticism Craig was espousing was swirling all around Los Angeles at the time, and he was swept up completely in its riptide.

Craig was going by the name Maitreya, and around this time took steps to have his name changed legally to Maitreya Kali, which was the name he later used on his albums. "I remember it being just Maitreya," says Cheryl. "I went down with him to some office so he could change his name to Maitreya legally." The name change reflected Craig's newfound belief that he was some kind of Christ figure. "He seemed to think he was some kind of messiah, yeah," confirms Cheryl. "He seemed to think that he had some divine thing that was going to happen. He wanted people to call him 'Master' and whatever. I was like 'I don't think so!'

"But he's got a lot of charisma," she continues, slipping momentarily into the present tense. "He could shift the energy so that people would kinda get pulled into the idea that there *was* something exceptional going on with him. But then there was a lot of confusion in it, too."

Craig—or Maitreya—did not explain the rationale behind his messiah status in any coherent way. "The conversations were not like typical conversations you'd have with somebody like 'Why do you think this or that?'" she explains. "He wasn't really talking about normal sorts of things like goals and dreams and schemes. We never had conversations like that. It had always been this kind of cosmic spectrum—like he thought all these things had happened and were going to happen and that he had some role in that."

Drugs, she insists, were not a factor in Craig's mental state. "We never used or had a single conversation about marijuana or any kind of drugs or alcohol," she says emphatically. "We used to eat health food. When I lived with him we used to spend really a *lot* of time meditating. He just used to meditate for hours and hours. He gained some abilities to sort of shift the energy, and I guess I kind of picked up some of that too because after I left him I remember there was a lot of different phenomenal things that would occur probably as a result of this. But I think he'd probably gotten delusions

involved there as well. It was a strange blend of different things that would come in."

The only time Craig's mind seemed to be in complete balance was when he was meditating or working on his music. According to Cheryl, many of the songs that would appear on the *Apache* and *Inca* albums were composed in that small apartment during the early months of 1970. "He was composing the music and he did always seem to have a certain level of focus regarding his music," she recalls. "I was totally enchanted with his music. His music was just amazing. He composed a lot of those songs, like 'Sam Pan Boat,' that was on that album. I remember that was such a beautiful little song. He just sat down over a matter of a few days and was putting all those songs together, and he continued to work on them and refine them. I never realized for a long time that he put them on an album, but I saw him composing them."

Even as Craig's life began to unravel, music remained a strong motivating force for him, and also continued to provide a certain level of financial stability. Cheryl recalls going with him to a publisher's office, probably Andy Williams' Claudine Music or Glen Campbell Music, to pick up royalty checks. Campbell's recording of Craig's song "Country Girl" had been released on his *Try A Little Kindness* album in 1969, and on January 28th, 1970, Campbell performed the song live on Johnny Cash's television show. Interestingly, on television, Campbell performed the song in an upbeat arrangement that was closer to the Penny Arkade's version than the rather sedate, overly orchestrated version he'd recorded for his album. Andy Williams had also performed Craig's "Christmas Holiday" on at least one of his Christmas television specials, providing another surge in royalties. These earnings were such that Craig was able to maintain his car, the same green Volkswagen Beetle he'd owned since '66 or '67, pay rent on his North Hollywood apartment, and take Cheryl out to eat every night.

Craig had continued to maintain many of his friends in the music business, including Mike Love. "They were both into similar kinds of things," says Cheryl. "Mike was into the meditation and eating vegetarian —we were all into that kind of thing."

Love also shared Craig's off-the-wall sense of humor. "I remember how the two of them really could set each other off," she continues. "I'll give you an example. One time, Craig and I were outside of a Laundromat, we

were doing our laundry, and Mike Love drives by in his hearse. This is in Hollywood somewhere. So we go jump in the car and we're driving down the street—I don't know what happened to our laundry, but we're driving down the street and the two of them are just kind of bouncing off of each other in kind of bizarre ways. So Mike starts driving through this red light *real* slow with his horn on to get attention—which meant that a group of police cars rounded us up and arrested everybody. It's the only time in my life I've ever been arrested—I didn't do anything but just the fact that I was in the car. They handcuffed us all and they took us down there [to the police station]. Then me and Craig got un-handcuffed and we sat out on the bench waiting for Mike to be released. I think they were probably questioning him. Then eventually he came out and everybody was relieved. Neither of us were charged with anything, but Mike probably got a ticket at least for going through the red light."

By now Craig was convinced Cheryl was his eternal soul mate. Cheryl, on the other hand, was not so sure. "When we first met, he'd come over and he was very enchanting," she recalls. "It seemed like we had an amazing connection. Then, after I started staying with him, suddenly another side of this person came out. Sometimes he was OK and it would seem very cosmic and wonderful, but then he would click into this other zone that was like *bizarre!* I never saw anybody that was quite like that. But we were doing a lot of meditation so you kind of go into other, higher levels of consciousness, and there was a lot of very cosmic things that were going on that were very intense. But then there was this other side of him that was just…*scary!* I left him when he started to show that."

According to Cheryl, the couple had only been living together for about six weeks when she made the decision to leave. "On a synergy level there were a lot of shifts that happened that were quite amazing," she recounts, "but a lot of his conversation and communication was kind of rambling. At one point I thought he could read my mind because there *was* a lot of telepathy. Then I kind of tested it and I found out that he didn't read this one thing on my mind, and that's when I left."

Craig had exercised control of the relationship with his bizarre mind games almost from the start, but as that control became more intimidating and unpredictable, Cheryl decided to break things off. Having made the decision to leave, she waited for the right moment then slipped away during

one of their walks in North Hollywood Park, leaving all her possessions behind. “I kind of figured it out like a little strategy,” she explains. “I stopped walking and then he kept walking and then I just left. I hitchhiked out of town.”

After a brief stay at her mother’s house in Pasadena, Cheryl next went to Laguna to stay with her father, and then headed to Colorado, where she spent the summer with a friend.

With his relationship with Cheryl over, Craig decided to take off on another trip, this time to Central and South America. The trip was evidently part of the spiritual journey that he’d begun in the Middle East and India.

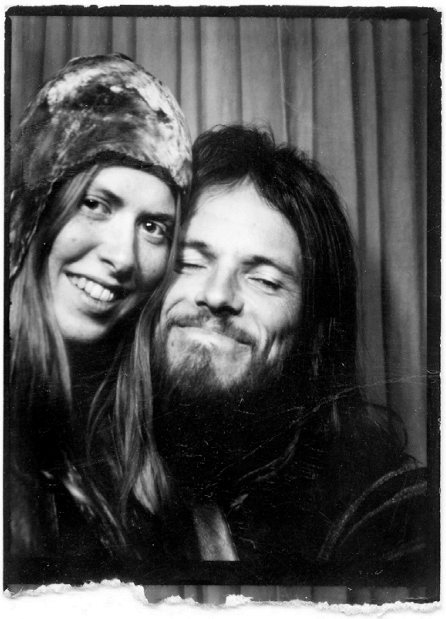
In Peru he explored the culture of the ancient Inca, visiting the temple at Pachacamac, and possibly Machu Picchu. The journey provided inspiration for his *Inca* album. It wasn’t all about ancient ruins though; Craig also spent some time with a Peruvian fashion model, Pocha Cárdenas, who was a runner-up in the Miss Peru contest that year. Several photos of Craig and Pocha appeared on the *Inca* album cover. He also made stops in Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina and the Galapagos Islands, and appears to have attracted some media attention along the way. A photograph taken on a street in Buenos Aires appears to show him being interviewed before a TV camera as a crowd gathers around. It’s interesting to speculate what he might have been talking about or why he would have been considered newsworthy.

Sometime in 1970 or ’71, Craig also made a pilgrimage to Yosemite National Park in Central California where, amid the grandeur of the vast granite cliffs and cascading waterfalls, he soaked up the spiritual echoes of the area’s original Native American inhabitants, the Ahwahneechee, inspiring the core theme of his *Apache* album.

Prior to leaving on his trip, to South America, though, Craig had attempted to seek out Cheryl and make amends. Cheryl’s mother, Shirley Knickelbein, was startled when he showed up on her doorstep one day asking about the whereabouts of her daughter. It was the first time she’d met Craig in person and she was instantly put off by him. “She never liked the ‘hippie’ look,” says Cheryl, “and she also thought he was strange.” Such was Shirley’s level of concern that she took it upon herself to contact Craig’s mother. “I don’t even know how she got the phone number, but she

did," says Cheryl. "It was years later that she told me about that conversation because I didn't even know she had called her. But that's how my mother ended up telling me that he had been in a mental institution before I met him.

"I think *he* had actually told me that, too," she confesses, "but it didn't register as a concern like it probably should have. Because he was in this very cosmic kind of a place, I thought maybe they just didn't understand that zone or whatever. That's probably how I talked to myself about it back then. So I think he must have been on the meds when I met him, but after he was in the apartment I think he stopped taking the meds because he had another side that came out that was pretty extreme. He'd be fine but then suddenly there'd be this other personality or whatever it was that would emerge. One side was very, very positive, and the other was really quite bizarre. It was hard to make sense of that. I was young and kind of naïve and didn't really understand what that was all about."



Cheryl and Craig, 1970. (Photo courtesy Cheryl Starsong)

Cheryl had a lot of unresolved feelings about the relationship, and when Craig returned from Peru in late 1970, they began talking again on the phone. Before long they started seeing each other again, too. "There had been so much that was so cosmic that left me very unresolved and thinking, 'Maybe he's better now?'" she remembers. "I don't know. I didn't have a

lot of framework to sort that out in. So I started talking to him on the phone and everything seemed to be wonderful. We'd have these great little conversations and so then I opened the door to have this contact with him again."

Craig's love for Cheryl was undiminished, and for a short time it seemed like their relationship was back on track. Before long, Craig proposed marriage and, after some hesitation, Cheryl said yes. "I thought maybe he was better," she explains, "because he had this side that was so enchanting and his music was so wonderful and all that. Back in those times, being a freak was kind of an 'in' thing. Eccentric was sort of a good thing."

Cheryl was swept up in the emotion of the moment, and the two of them immediately went out and purchased a wedding dress. Soon though, Cheryl began to feel pressured by Craig's insistence that they get married as soon as possible. When he took her down to City Hall to get a marriage license, she finally felt the need to put the brakes on. "I did not feel comfortable with the pressure," she says. "I felt I had to exit as he was so set on his course. I ran from there over to the police department and I asked them if they could just hold him until I could leave because I didn't want to be there. He followed me over there and he was telling them this and that. I don't know that they held him very long; they just gave me a few minutes to get out the door so he couldn't see where I was going. I can't remember where I went from there. I probably ended up hitchhiking because I didn't have any way of going anywhere. I can't remember where I went."

Confused and frustrated by this unexpected turn of events, Craig returned to the apartment and ripped the wedding dress to shreds. "When I left he told me he tore it all up and destroyed it," she says. "But I'm not going to get married to someone who was forcing me to marry him! Because he had that other side. If he hadn't have had that other side, I maybe would've wanted to stay with him, but when somebody's threatening with their behavior and off in some of these other weird zones, well, I don't wanna be *there*!"

After the breakup Cheryl ended up back in Pasadena, where she moved in with her good friend Dyane Quinn. Dyane had recently separated from her husband—temporarily, as it turned out—and was living alone in a small apartment on Chester Street so she was happy to have Cheryl's company.

Not long afterwards, though, Craig and Cheryl rekindled their romance, and he started coming over.

Cheryl still had feelings for Craig and held out hope that she could somehow bring him around to the relative normalcy they'd shared at the beginning of their relationship. Dyane, on the other hand, was not so sure. "He was nutty as a fruitcake!" she says. "The only time Craig even resembled being normal was when he was sitting playing guitar and singing, and then you could see what he could have been. But as soon as he stopped, he was just *nuts*. That's the only word that comes into mind. Nothing really made a whole lot of sense, the things he would talk about. It was like he was on his own little space. He never had any conversation with me that really made sense. It wasn't like normal conversation, it was always like he was the Messiah and he could teach you things."

Presumably because of his Buddhist beliefs, Craig was deeply opposed to harming or, much worse, killing any living creature—even flies and cockroaches. "He didn't want you to kill bugs," remembers Dyane. "He didn't want you to because he wanted them to keep living. He believed that he could kind of 'wish' them away. He really did think he had a lot of power. He'd say that he could mentally go to wherever he went and mentally get rid of them—which of course wasn't true!" she laughs. "But he really *did* believe that!"

When Craig would come calling, Dyane would usually make herself scarce so he and Cheryl could have some time alone together. "Craig would come over, and I wanted to give Craig and Cheryl, you know, time," she explains. "But a couple of times he spent the night, and there was only one bed so the three of us slept together. We never did anything but sleep," she adds. "There wasn't anything odd or anything!"

Craig always carried his guitar with him, and when he played his music Dyane could see quite plainly the qualities that had attracted her friend to him. "It was so nice to see that he did have that normal—well, there's nothing 'normal'—but this *nice* side where he'd look at you and smile when he was singing, and you could tell that that was something that he just *adored*!

"Beautiful music!" she continues. "It was the way he played his guitar. When he played the music it was just the most incredible acoustic guitar playing you'd ever, ever heard. He really could take you to a different

space. You would think that he was actually a normal, coherent human being when you were listening to his music. He was a great guitar player, his songs were good, and he had a good voice too. It was like that was the only place he could go to be normal. And I said to Cheryl, 'If that's the Craig that you met when you first met him, I can see why you could like him.' But the other side was so cuckoo, I can't even explain it!"

Perhaps Craig had been correctly medicated when he'd first met Cheryl. Certainly with her he'd managed to find some acceptance and some calm. But by now there was a noticeable decline in both his appearance and his state of mind. "He started to be kind of disheveled in the way he put himself together," remembers Cheryl. "His cleanliness and his sense of order were really starting to go downhill. His mental state had always gone up and down, but definitely now there was some sort of decline going on."

At one point Craig presented Cheryl with a 45 rpm record, an acetate he'd had pressed up of a song he'd written especially for her, called "Cheryl." On it he sang, "*Cheryl let me be your man and I promise that eternally you and I shall be in love forever.*" The record—of which apparently only one copy was made—was ultimately a futile gesture to win her back. "I wasn't all that impressed with it," she admits. "He was giving me this song, but there was this other element in it. I don't think that was one of his better songs. It was more like he was trying to get me back and I just didn't want to go there."

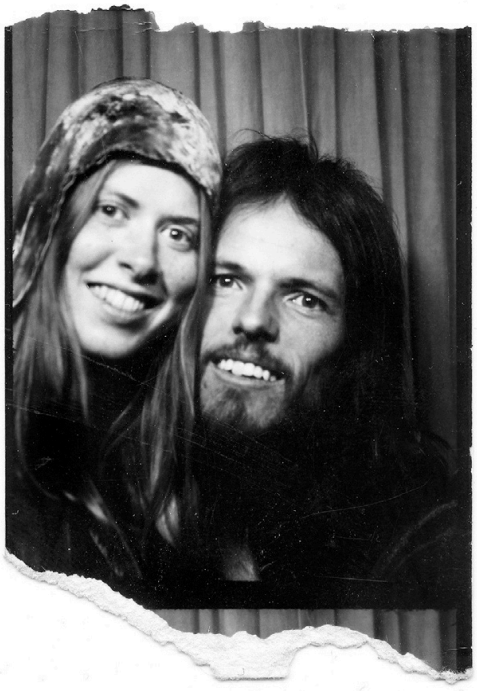
Cheryl was slipping away from Craig, like a piece of driftwood sweeping out of reach of a drowning man. Adrift in a sea of delusions, his emotions were tossed from one extreme to another. The sense of calm he found through music and meditation, and in Cheryl's company, could turn in a matter of moments to a seething turmoil that threatened to spill over into violence. "He had these delusions and he would get into this very intense place," recalls Cheryl. "He could switch really quickly. Some of it was this wonderful energy that was super-cosmic, and then in a moment he would be in this other zone that was like scary."

Things came to a head one evening at the apartment. Dyane's husband had come over, along with a couple of other male friends. Cheryl was in the kitchen, and one of the men, Joe, asked her if she could bring him a glass of water. Craig saw this as an affront to his woman.

“Don’t talk to her like that!” he snapped at Joe. “Don’t you tell her what to do!”

Seeing that he was getting a rise out of Craig, Joe upped the ante and began asking Cheryl to bring him more things from the kitchen. “Joe was very much of a smartass kind of guy,” explains Dyane, “but he was a good guy. Joe was kidding; Craig *wasn’t* kidding. Craig was taking this *very* seriously. And then at some point Joe really saw that he wasn’t interacting with a guy who had all his proper faculties.”

What had started as a harmless joke quickly escalated into a serious confrontation. Cheryl attempted to defuse the situation, but Craig’s fury only increased. “I was trying to talk him down over some upset he was having with somebody,” she remembers, “and he got real mad with me for doing that and got into this really scary place with his energy. I guess this other guy was going to get into a fight with him.”



“It was going to get physical,” agrees Dyane. “Oh yeah, it was definitely going to get physical, and you don’t really want to do that with someone who isn’t in their right mind.”

Craig began screaming and throwing things against the wall. “He was threatening to kill people,” says Dyane, “saying, ‘If you do that one more

time...’”

Any one of the other three men could have taken Craig down physically, but his demeanor was so intimidating that none of them dared make a move. “There were five other people in there, and the guys—my husband, Joe, and the other guy—were all very, very macho men,” continues Dyane. “They didn’t take anything from anybody, and, let me tell you, they all backed down from him because they could see that this guy could do some real damage. My husband wasn’t afraid of anything and yet that night even he just backed off. He didn’t do a thing. That’s how wacky Craig could get. You knew that something could really, really happen if you didn’t keep your mouth shut. And so after that everyone kept their mouth shut and then everybody pretty much left. It just wasn’t a good situation.”

That night Craig had revealed a dark, violent side to his personality that Cheryl had never seen before. It terrified her. After fleeing the apartment, she never returned. She never wanted to see Craig Smith—or Maitreya—again. “I made sure there was no way he could find me,” she says. “I never saw him after that.”

“It’s really too bad,” reflects Dyane. “I always found it sad because of the Craig I saw when he played his music. You could tell that that was the way he really was, deep in his heart. I think one of the things that really drew Cheryl to him was his musicianship and his writing ability. Because she liked what he wrote about. It wasn’t heavy and cuckoo like he was, it was totally the opposite, and I believe that was the way he was when she first met him. I really believed that, until that night, she thought maybe he could change. But he scared the *hell* out her. He scared the hell out of *everybody* in that room.”

It was only a few days later, possibly even the next day, that Craig showed up again at Dyane’s door looking for Cheryl. When she told him that she had no idea of Cheryl’s whereabouts, Craig shifted his attentions onto Dyane. She rebuffed him, but he kept returning and pressing her to be with him. “I wasn’t going for that at all,” she says. “He’d come around at all times, and I didn’t really want to let him in because I’d seen what he was capable of, and I wanted nothing to do with him after that. So I eventually had to move from there. And that was the last time I saw Craig.”

Although Craig no doubt continued to look for Cheryl, he never found her. She never saw him or heard from him again. She had no idea of his

whereabouts or any knowledge of the albums he later released on which her name figured so prominently.

Not surprisingly, her experiences with Craig Smith left a permanent mark on Cheryl's life. "After I left him it took me years to sort it out," she reflects. "I was very quiet for a long time, because the connection we'd had was very cosmic, and I knew that people wouldn't understand it—*none of it*—so it made it hard to talk about it. It confused me and I didn't know where I wanted to go. On the one hand I liked the meditation and the kind of connection we had through that process—with other men it was so *mundane*—but on the other hand, the crazy part, I didn't know how to understand that either. I didn't really connect or get involved with anybody too soon after that. I was still doing a lot of meditation, and I was doing creative things and I got back into doing modeling, but I was in kind of a different zone. It took a lot of time to process what that was all about. It took me into a very strange place."

17

AUM FRICTION

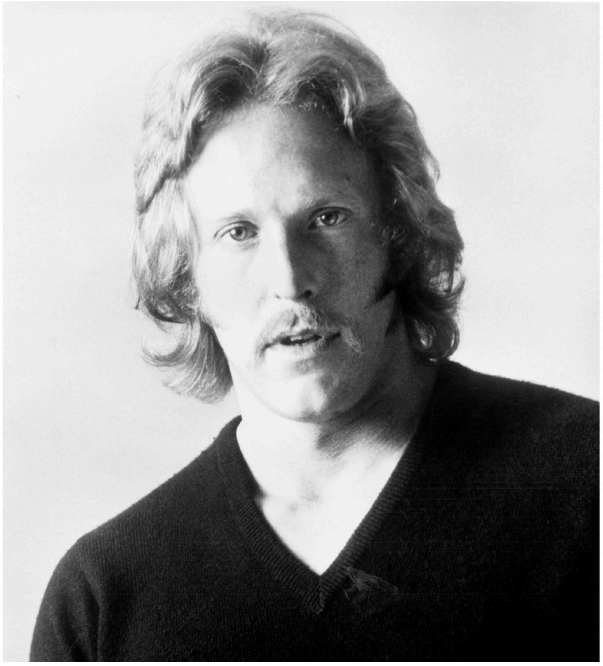
Aum Friction Satya Sai Maitreya Kali Mohammed was I no one else or this Globe Explodes

Don Glut's assessment that Craig was a keg of dynamite about to go off was right on target. The fuse had been lit; the only question was how quickly it would burn down. Had Smith received proper medical treatment when he returned from Afghanistan, his condition might have been corrected or at least stabilized through psychiatric counseling and medication. He may have been briefly institutionalized, as Craig's mother allegedly told Shirley Knickelbein, but without access to his medical records—which are confidential—it's not possible to ascertain what treatment, if any, he received. It seems likely he'd been properly medicated when he first knew Cheryl, a period when he also abstained from the use of illegal drugs. Afterwards, though, Smith's mental condition continued to worsen, exacerbated by his use of marijuana, hashish, and LSD.

Jason Laskay was alarmed by his friend's behavior, which was becoming increasingly bizarre and threatening. "He would say, 'Maitreya told me to kill people that I know. That everybody should die.' Shit like that. Some of his reasoning why he had to kill certain people was because the Maitreya thing was a higher power that was telling him to do that."

When Craig continued to show up at his house, Jason would often pretend he was not home. "I just didn't want to be around him," confesses Laskay. "It was too difficult. He didn't talk about anything normal, and he didn't act normal. Sometimes he would walk all the way up the hill to my house and he would just stand in my driveway. He knew there was times

where I was just not opening the door. He would stand around staring in your front porch, imagining whatever his powers were creating around him."



Jason Laskay, ca. 1970.

Craig was exhibiting all the classic symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia, yet at the time people were not equipped to recognize those symptoms. To most people he was just another burned-out hippie. A kid who'd taken too much acid and fried his brain. Another misguided casualty of the love and peace generation.

Maybe he was all of those things, but he was also a ticking time bomb.

Craig took to prowling around the streets, dropping in unexpectedly on acquaintances, or just standing outside their houses staring at the windows or into space. "He used to hang outside people's houses at all hours and say 'I'm gonna kill you,'" remembers Jason. "It was just horrible. He would approach people and threaten to kill them or then he would want to *be* killed. Just this real confrontational, creepy, scary stuff."

Craig had armed himself and seemed ready to make good on his threats. "He was carrying weapons for a while," says Laskay. "I remember he said he had a gun and that he was going to shoot people, but I never saw it. And then he had a knife. He had a curved Indian knife, and somebody told me

that the cops took that away from him. There was one girl in particular that was particularly freaked out by him because he would go to her house. She called the cops and they were telling her that they couldn't do anything about it until he really did something violent."

When Jason called Craig's brother Gary, he told him the same thing. "I checked in about getting Craig committed because he was so scary and weird to people, and Gary said for him to get committed Craig had to do some harm to somebody. I think they had a restraining order against Craig at that time. They did get a restraining order against him, I think, but then they lost track of him."

The timeline is hazy here, but the restraining order may have been the result of an incident involving Craig's father—possibly the same fight Cheryl alluded to earlier. According to one rumor, a heated argument between Craig and his father became physical, and the altercation ended with a china cabinet being pulled over and Craig's father losing an eye to broken glass. It doesn't appear that any criminal charges were ever filed in this incident, so most likely it is apocryphal. Had it occurred, surely it would have been more than enough for his family to have had Craig committed. "I didn't know if there was any physical thing," comments Laskay. "I think I heard from his brother, and somebody else too, that he went against his dad, and then I think Craig might have told me, 'I hated him and I wanted to kill him' or something. But he did it with a laugh, like, 'But I wasn't really going to.'"

Craig's behavior was particularly disturbing in the wake of the Manson Family killings in July of 1969. After the brutal slayings at the Tate and LaBianca residences, the entire city of Los Angeles was on edge. Paranoia was rampant, especially among people in the entertainment industry, many of whom had personal connections to either the victims or the killers.

"When Craig was getting really strange and showing up at my door all the time, and after the Manson thing, I borrowed a gun from a friend of mine to have at my bedside," confesses Laskay. "I carried it around for about two weeks. It scared the shit out of me, too, that I would have a gun. And then, coincidentally, shortly after that, the guy that loaned me the gun got killed by some drug dealer. He and another guy I knew, they found them tied up in a car and shot and burned. It was a time when it seemed like a lot of people were going crazy. We had a big huge earthquake too [February

9th, 1971]. I remember I was in that stilt house when that first big earthquake came, and we were running down the street, and the gas was going off. Everybody smelled gas. It was like 'Don't light any cigarettes!' It was very bizarre. And the Manson thing really threw everybody off because it was so creepy. Everybody seemed to know somebody around that thing. Jay Sebring cut a lot of people's hair—it just seemed to reach out and touch a lot of people. It was supposed to be Terry Melcher he was going after, who was Bruce Johnston's partner."

Craig appeared to relish his own connection to Manson, as brief as it was. He would frequently bring it up in conversations, and would go on to mention Manson several times on his album covers, once in reference to the Beach Boys, whom he referred to parenthetically as "Man Sons." It all fed into the darker side of his Maitreya persona, which continued to grow, further obscuring and obliterating the light, carefree person he had once been.

It was hard to tell how much of this persona was real, and how much was a put-on. Craig seemed to take sadistic enjoyment in pushing people's buttons, frightening them with outrageous statements or violent threats. But there was a volatility to his words and actions that was undeniable. "You never know what was truth and what was sensationalism coming out of him," remarks Laskay. "Because he was always trying to shock people or scare them or put them off somehow. Sometimes he would bring people over, too. In '70, when I was still living up on Sunswept, I remember he brought up some guy-he-kind-of-met-on-the-street kind of guy, who was really like a homeless criminal that you would never let in your house. Craig would be like, 'This is my new friend.' I remember they just sat outside my house in the grass for a while."

Craig also seemed to have some kind of uncanny radar when it came to locating the whereabouts of old friends and acquaintances. He would often show up uninvited in the most unlikely places. "It really got scary," says Laskay. "He would show up at things that you had no idea how he would know or find out. I remember that happening at places I was at where he would just show up and people were just floored."

David Price had one such memorable visit around early 1970.

"I was married to my first wife and we had moved into a house on a street called Vista Del Monte in Van Nuys," he remembers. "I was sitting in

the living room there one day by my lonesome—my wife worked and I was of course a musician so what was I doing? I was hanging around. And I remember looking out the front window and seeing this really strange-looking guy with a beard, lots of hair all over the place—a very homeless, street-looking kind of guy—striding across my front lawn. He came up and he knocked on the door. I opened up the door and said, 'Yes?' and I recognized that it was Craig. And he was like, 'Hey! Dave!'

"I have no idea how he found me there. I don't know. So I said 'come in' and we sat in my living room and he basically told me about his adventures—his trials and tribulations, I guess—very intensely, which is what he was, and with a real hard edge to it. He was acting very, very volatile and unpredictable. So I'm sitting there, I'm a guitar player and so I hang out in bars with loads of drunks and stuff, so I wasn't intimidated by it, but I was thinking to myself, 'This guy has got off the bus in Crazy Town. He's not operating well.' So I was trying to kind of talk to him." He laughs nervously. "I remember this fairly well because it was an intense event. I was trying to talk to him about how he was doing, whether he was getting any help or anything. 'Do you have a place to stay?' You know? 'What's going on?' And he would just ramble on about this stuff, about India, and about being attacked and being robbed and all of this other stuff, and he got more and more agitated."

Price was shocked by Smith's appearance, which was so opposite to the wholesome, clean-cut image he'd had in the Penny Arkade. "He looked like he had been sleeping in dirt for a couple of months. He had a wild outgrowth of a beard; his hair was just in a tangle and all over the place. He was very, very, very darkly tanned, a dark reddish tan like you'd get if you were out in the elements a lot. He was in a terrible shape. Terrible shape."

Even more disturbing was his behavior. "One of the things he kept doing while we were sitting in my living room was… I would start talking and he would hold his hand up, like palm facing me, and sort of push through the air at me and tell me that he was 'reading my energy'—particularly when whatever I was talking about was displeasing to him. He would go, 'Ooh, that's so negative. I can feel your energy.'"

The first time this happened was when David reacted unfavorably to his new name, Maitreya. "He told me that was his name and I just kind of

looked at him and said, '*Really?*' That was the first time the hand went up and he was 'Oooohh! You're being negative. You're bumming my deal.'"

Craig appeared to believe he was physically pushing away the bad energy emanating from Price. "He was absolutely serious," declares Price. "That I will tell you."

After some time, Price was eventually able to persuade Smith to leave. "Finally I did the basic, 'Well, I gotta go' and kind of threw him out, and got in my car and drove away like I actually had some place to go. That was my first run-in with him when he came back, and it was very disturbing. After that I heard from various people that they'd seen him and everybody's reaction was the same: 'Wow, man, he's really gone off the reservation.'"

Blue Mountain Eagle with David Price, bottom right.

Price had one more encounter with Craig, a year or two later. "The last time I saw him was truly strange," he remembers, "because I was driving from Hollywood to the Valley up Laurel Canyon. Laurel crosses Mulholland at the top of the ridge—you go over that ridge and now you're

heading down into the Valley. Coming up from the Hollywood side, just before you get to the light at Mulholland there's kind of a curve to the left and a curve to the right and then you're at the light. And off to your left is like a canyon and there's just wild brush that goes down, there's no houses there. I was driving along, and I have no idea how he even knew it was me, but as I came around the curve to the left I saw just out of the corner of my eye two figures coming up out of the brush, which I thought was strange, so I looked over there and it was Craig. He looked a little different. Probably a little more—presentable is probably not the right word, but a little less wild. But there was some guy was with him; they both looked like guys who were living in bushes in the canyon. And I kept driving—I didn't really recognize it was him at first, I just saw these two figures come up. And as I got to where the curve goes back to the right, I hear this voice screaming my name, and I look in the rearview mirror and it's Craig standing there in the middle of Laurel Canyon screaming my name. And I, uh, I kept on going. I'll tell you that right now: I kept on driving.

"I don't make light of his situation," he adds, "but at the time, when I heard him screaming I looked in the rearview mirror and I figured out who it was—the guy's standing in the middle of the street, with other cars going by both ways, waving his arms and screaming my name at the top of his lungs. 'Spider!' I think he was calling, which was my nickname. I made the light and disappeared into the Valley and that was the last I saw of Craig."

18

IF THEY TUMBLE DOWN AND BREAK

After Armadillo broke up in 1969, Chris Ducey says, "I began the search for who I was as a solo artist." Still signed as a writer to Beechwood Publishing, he recorded several publishing demos. One of his compositions, "The Jet Song (When the Weekend's Over)," was recorded for Bell Records by the Groop. The song became a minor hit in Europe, and is now highly regarded by fans of sunshine pop.

Along with music, Ducey also continued to pursue acting. He played a character in a Beechwood-funded Off Broadway musical called *Alison*, a takeoff on *Alice in Wonderland*, which also included one of his songs. He also had walk-on parts in a couple of CBS-TV shows. Through his appearance in *Alison* he met a casting director for *Hair* and was invited to audition in New York for *Hair*, which was set to move to L.A. and open at the Aquarius Theater. Had Chris got the part, half of Heather and Her Feathers would have been reunited, but it was not to be. "I don't think I read very well," he confesses, "because I was on the plane the next day coming back home to L.A.!"

Fate was on his side though, because shortly afterwards he met Ed Millis: "A really nice guy from New Bern, North Carolina, a UNC grad and a very, very excellent piano player in the Elton John mode. We also had a very exceptional vocal blend, like with Craig and I. Ed had a very, very mellow round voice so we also had a great blend, I feel."

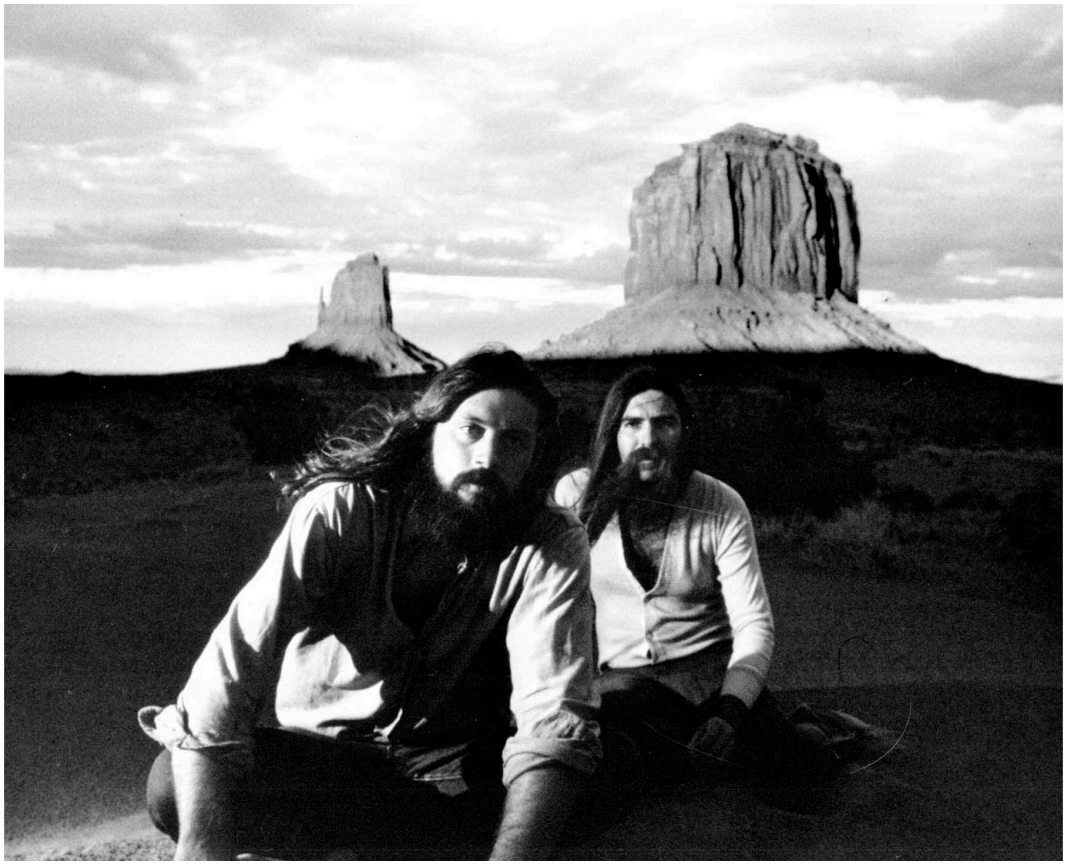
Ducey and Millis bonded as a piano-guitar duo called Prairie Madness. "We made our instruments into an orchestra," says Chris. "We mic'd piano and guitar big to fill the room. Two acoustic instruments and two voices

turned into a big sound. We went at it sonically, not just musically. From the beginning that was our M.O."

In late 1969 they became musical directors of an elaborate stage musical called *Visigoths*, which played at the Ivar Theater in Hollywood. The plot, which Chris describes as "futuristic, historical and semi-blasphemous," played out in a "time bubble" set with wild visual designs, slide projectors, sound effects, quadraphonic sound and a live band. *Visigoths* ran for just four weeks, but was forced to close due to cost overruns. "It got bad reviews but the underground people loved it," remarks Chris. "Al Jardine came and left with his jaw dropped because he dug it so much."

Another musical celebrity who caught the show was Frankie Valli, who went on to cover its closing number, "Circles in the Sand." Prairie Madness also cut the song for the first single in 1970, produced by Chad Stuart of Chad & Jeremy for Columbia.

Chris and Ed's musical partnership continued through 1973, during which time they played shows on both coasts, and recorded a self-titled album for Columbia, produced by Matthew Fisher of Procol Harum. "It's a very deep, melodic record," says Chris. "For its time and place it fits in a certain box somewhere. I don't know what box it is! It wasn't very successful except for the college market. To this day I think it's OK. I was proud of that record."



Prairie Madness, ca. 1971, with Chris Ducey (left) and Ed Millis. (Photo courtesy Chris Ducey)

Chris and his wife Nancy, who by now had two children, had several encounters with Craig during 1970–71. “We’d heard he was back,” recounts Chris, “and I think perhaps I called him or he called me. Then he showed up at the house.”

Chris was disturbed by the changes he saw in his old musical partner. “He looked very…” He struggles to find the words. “His eyes had gone; the gaze he gave you was *out there*. He had a scraggly beard, as I recall, scraggly hair. His name wasn’t Craig anymore. His name was Maitreya,” he laughs uncomfortably. “We didn’t like that either.”

Craig began showing up uninvited at their house. Late one evening Chris and Nancy arrived home after a night out to find Craig there, haranguing their 13-year-old babysitter about being her personal Christ figure—“Basically as a way of trying to get into her pants,” reckons Chris. Not surprisingly the girl was distressed by the encounter, and Chris told Craig in no uncertain terms to leave. In the ensuing confrontation, Craig

turned on Nancy, telling her, “You’re the Inca princess who got between me and Chris! You broke up Lennon and McCartney!”

After a second incident when he again showed up uninvited and acted bizarrely, they realized they needed to remove Craig from their lives. Craig’s mental state seemed to be another disturbing symptom of the dark atmosphere that was shrouding Los Angeles at the time. “A few months later Ed and I witnessed a double murder on Hollywood Boulevard,” recalls Chris. “Then there were fires all around the Valley.” This all added to the impetus to leave. In 1971, the Duceys pulled up stakes and relocated to San Anselmo. “I’ve never left Marin County since.”

After four years together, Chris and Ed’s musical partnership came to an end in late 1973. The following year Chris scored a record deal with Warner Brothers, which resulting in a 1975 solo album, *Duce of Hearts*. “It was kind of a mish-mash,” admits Chris, “but a lot of fun to make.” When the album failed to sell, he dropped out of the music business for a while and concentrated on writing and video. Like so many of Craig’s closest friends and collaborators, Ducey went on to a rewarding life in the arts and entertainment field. He has continued to write and record new music, as well as experimenting with his art in different visual and high-tech mediums. Always moving forward, he’s one of the smartest and most tirelessly creative people I’ve ever met.

After 1971, Chris never saw Craig Smith again. For the most part he banished him from his mind completely. “What a guy. I hope he’s OK,” he told me as we sat in his living room in 2002. “I don’t wish Craig any ill harm at all. I hope some people helped him. I hope he made fortunes on all his royalties in music and has the best medical care in the world and is living in some kind of pill heaven somewhere.”

Sadly though, that was not the case.

All of the people who’d known Craig Smith before he’d left on his travels were disturbed and ultimately heartbroken by the changes they saw in this once cheerful, outgoing and inordinately talented young person. Heather MacRae had known Craig longer than any of them, and had been the last to see him before he’d left on his travels. When he’d visited her in New York in 1968 she’d not found anything particularly unusual or

concerning about the changes in his appearance or his interest in Eastern mysticism. But when she saw him next, about a year later, his personality had taken a much darker turn.

After her divorce from Gordon MacRae, Heather's mother had married Ronald Wayne, the producer of the Gleason show. Heather was staying with them in Golden Beach, Florida, and Craig called and asked if he could visit them. "My mother at the time was doing *The Jackie Gleason Show* down in Florida, that's why I was down there, and she and my stepfather allowed him to come and stay in the house with us," she explains. "My family loved him."

Heather MacRae, ca. 1972.

Heather went to Miami Airport to pick Craig up. She waited at the gate, but there was no sign of Craig. "He didn't get off the plane. I waited until everybody got off the plane—in those days you could go meet the planes and wait right there where everybody got off the plane. All the flight

attendants were coming off, and I said, 'Look, is there anybody else on the plane? I have a friend named Craig…' And they said, 'Oh… Does he have a robe on?' I said, 'I don't know, probably.' They said, 'Yes, he's still on the plane and we can't get him off.'"

Eventually someone was able to get Craig off the plane, but Heather was horrified when she saw her friend again. "He looked really, really crazy," she says. "He was *scary.*"

Craig's visit didn't last long. "He was clearly really insane," says Heather, "and my stepfather wanted him to leave the house because they woke up and he was standing over them with a knife. He was staying in one of the guest rooms and he was walking around in the middle of the night and he had a knife. My stepfather said, 'I don't want him here. He's scaring me'—because he was really kind of scary."

From Miami, Craig next headed to the Bahamas. "He went off to the Bahamas for a day trip and I think they kicked him off [the islands] because he was so scary. It's such a sad thing because I don't really know what happened to him. He lost his mind."

The last time Heather saw Craig was in late June of 1972 when she was performing in *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the Los Angeles Amphitheater. "It was the opening of the Amphitheater, before it was enclosed," she recalls. "It was outdoors at the time. *Jesus Christ Superstar* had been on Broadway and this was the premiere production that opened the whole Amphitheater season. We had trailers as our dressing rooms, and I remember there was a knock on my door and there was Craig. I was like 'whoa,' because I didn't know how he got back there. I said, 'Craig, how are you?' I was trying to really just be calm about it, but he did scare me a little bit … He looked homeless and derelict, and he said he wanted to say hi to me. I don't know how he knew I was there, but I guess he saw my name and just walked up. There really wasn't much security."

Craig's appearance had deteriorated considerably since the last time she'd seen him. "He looked really scary—greasy hair and weird and skinny and strange and... *scary*. He was scaring me. He was scaring everybody, and just totally looked insane, and would say weird things, as I recall."

Ted Neely, who was playing the starring role of Jesus, was also around. After giving him a long, intense look, Craig told him, "You're gonna die on the cross."

Heather was polite to Craig and attempted to humor him, but he was creeping everybody out. Eventually she had to have somebody escort him out. “I don’t think I ever saw him again. I might have seen him on Ventura Boulevard wandering around, but that was probably the last time that I ever really saw him that I recall.

“I’ve never heard anything about him since then,” she continues. “I just know that it was really such a shame because he was a totally, wonderfully gifted person. It might have been drugs, but, I mean, let’s face it, most of us in the ’60s did go through our drug period and take hallucinogens and stuff. But I never would have thought that Craig would’ve taken any drugs. He was just so—God! He was just so Mr. All-American! Not like a square or anything but just really… It just blew my mind. He was really one of my closest male friends ever.”

TV TIMES
Los Angeles Times
WEEKLY TV MAGAZINE
DAILY LISTINGS ■ FEB. 28-MARCH 6, 1965
So what's new in Mayberry?
Andy Williams and all the gang

Instant Fame: Craig Smith (front row, second right) with Andy Williams, the Good Time Singers and the rest of the cast of the *Andy Williams Show*, March 1965.

Craig Smith (top), and (below) Chris Ducey, Suzannah Jordan and Craig Smith on location in New York City. Digital images courtesy of UCLA Television & Film Archive

The Happenets, a TV pilot by Herb Brodkin's Plautus Productions, starring Craig Smith, Chris Ducey and Suzannah Jordan. The show was slated to air in primetime on ABC-TV in the fall of 1966, but

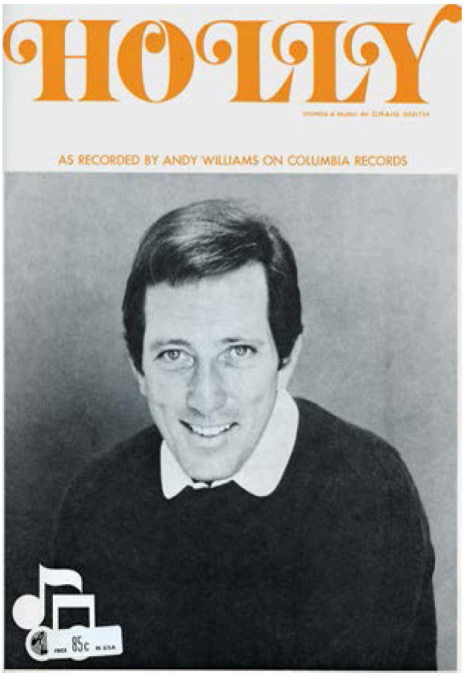
was dropped from the schedule.

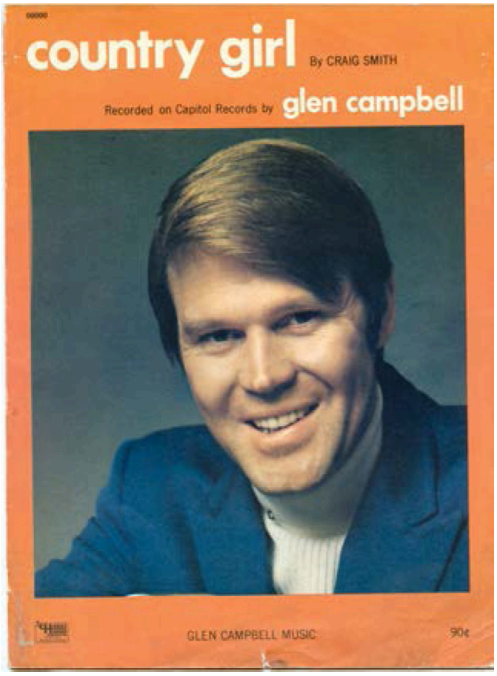
Chris & Craig: Craig Smith (left) and Chris Ducey, March 10, 1967. (Photo: Henry Diltz)

The Penny Arkade at TTG Studio in Hollywood, October 1967. Left to right: Don Glut Chris Ducey, Craig Smith, Bobby Donaho. (Photo courtesy Chris Ducey)

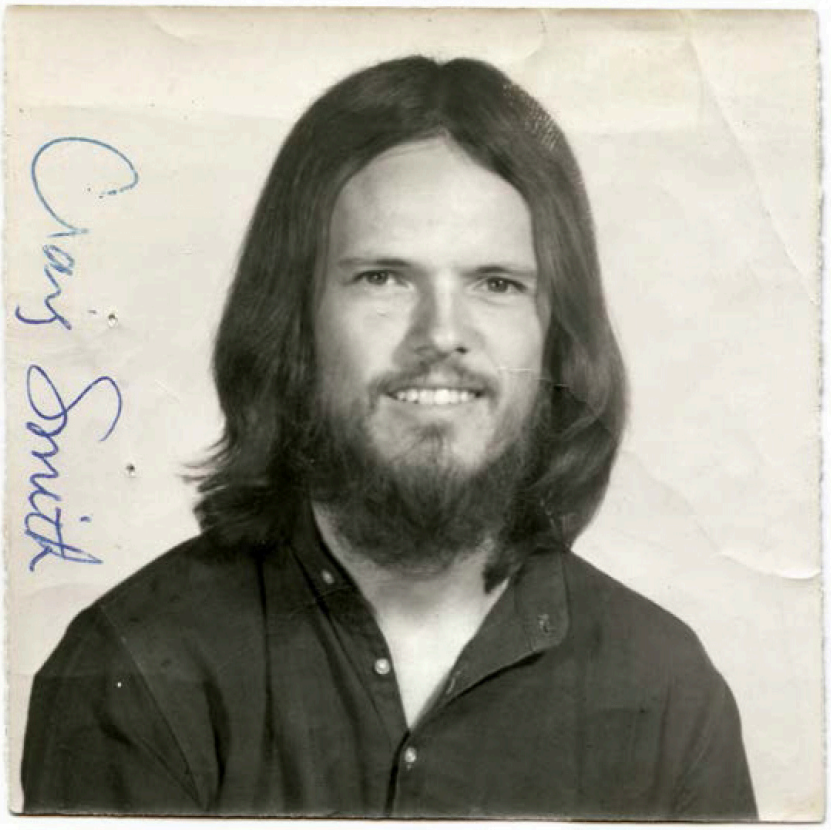
Michael Nesmith working with the Penny Arkade at TTG Studio, October 1967. (Photos courtesy Chris Ducey)

Craig Smith (right) at Melody dinger's wedding reception, August 1969. He had recently started going by the name Maitreya Kali. (Photo courtesy Melody dinger)



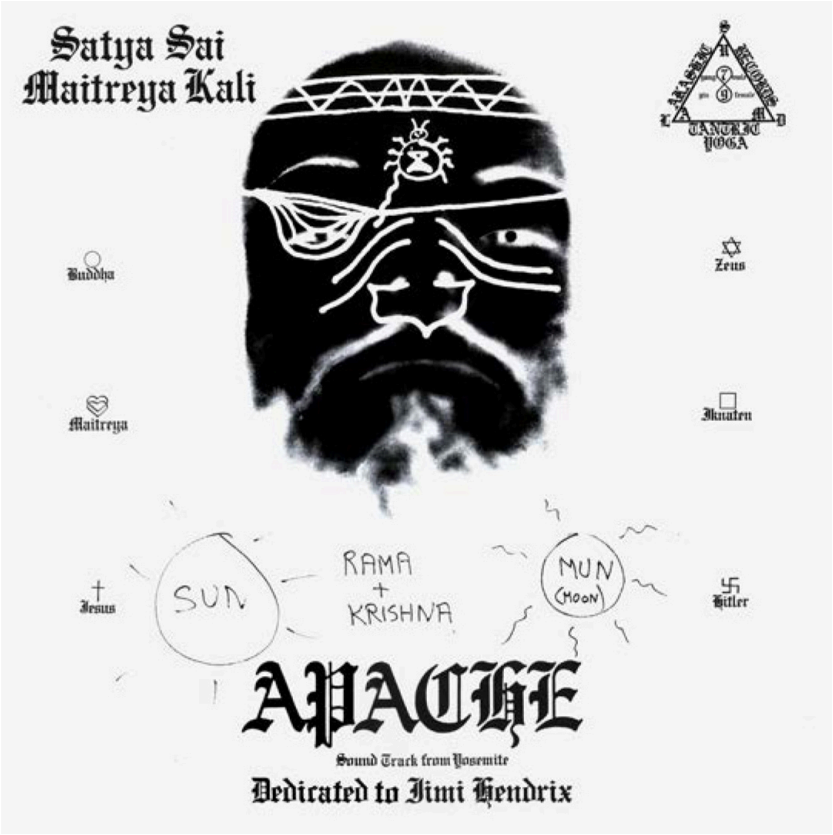


Sheet music for two of Craig's most successful compositions: "Holly," recorded by Andy Williams and Jim Pike of the Lettermen, and "Country Girl," recorded by Glen Campbell.

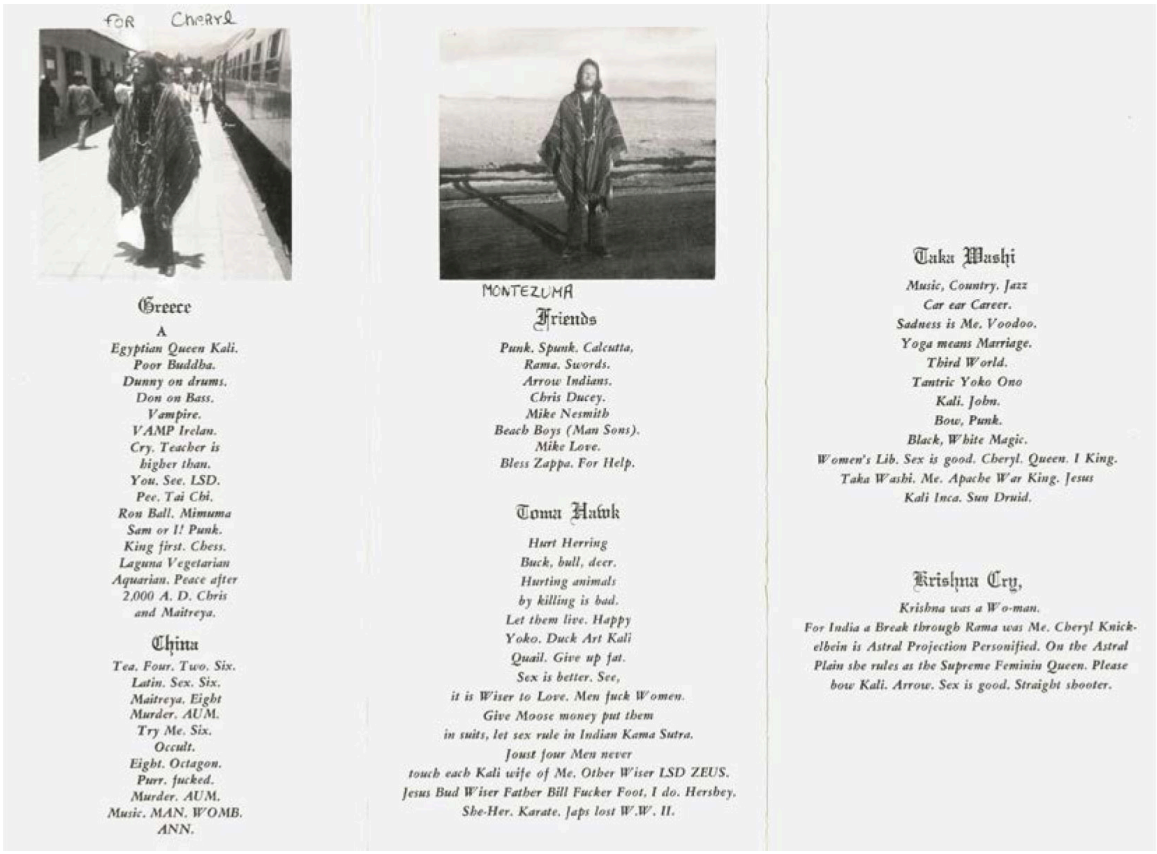


Craig Smith ID photo, circa 1970. (Photo courtesy Cheryl Starsong)

Two shots of Craig (Maitreya) taken while he was traveling in Central and South America in late 1970. (Photo courtesy Cheryl Starsong)



Front cover of the *Apache* LP, credited to Satya Sai Maitreya Kali. Craig had 100-200 copies pressed in early 1972.



ATAhualpa WITHOUT WIFE.

Sex Is Taka

Drue J. C. I love her forever and Ever. King of Happy Hunting. How corny. Sex. Love. Equation of ignorance Samurai. Nose ring. Satya tattoo. AUM. Kill Queer. Sword. Razor sharp. Long hair, Beard. Ear rings.

Saturn, Earth

Truth. Sat in Sanskrit of India. I love India. I was Jesus. Read Taka Wasbi. Apache Kingly Won Nose Ear Gold is Sun, Silver Moon. Man must Bow low before. Aquarian Gospel. LSD. Paul McCartney Paul it ticks the LSD. Peggy Reese. Diane. Sylvia. Kundalini. Kind of leaning. I've earned your attention. Qui a plus LSD' argent. Cute. Aphrodite. Lucy Venus.

GABOR SZABO, JESUS. I AM. KRISHNA IS LETTERMEN. MONKEES. Cheryl.

BLACK AND WHITE IS TAN-TRICK.

MAN andy WILLIAMS

GLEN CAMPBELL

Cheryl. Thank you.

"APACHE RENAISSANCE"

War Bonnet

Apache is the Me, AUM. Cryin' was the BUD Kingdom Folkloring in America. DAH. I wash my war Clare. Light. All. Sher. Tushita Paradise. Ak Akashic Ash ick. Buddha is Bow. AUM. Aura. King Eight. Trevor. Tush Butt eat Pill Ass purrin'. Asprin. LSD Jesus Christ. ZEUS. Astral Ass(as in to sit to eat)troll. Wizard. Me. Meditate. Eat. Me. It. ZEN. END.

One of the inserts included inside some copies of the *Apache* LP.

Cover of the *Inca* LP, also pressed in a very limited quantity in 1972. It was combined with *Apache* to create a double-album set in a gatefold cover.

Peru

Peru

Peru

Ecuador

Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires

Yosemite

Galapagos Islands

MACHINE GUN

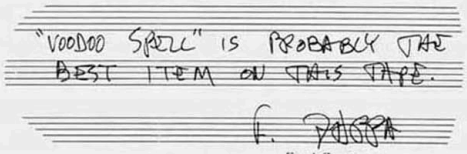
Craig Smith saved the planet, did you? He died for a righteous cause masculinity, promiscuitous in reverse Love. Viet Nam Satya Sai Maitreya Kali. Vee Et Nam We ate Nam War is Ignorant, Murder Aum. Although Craig Smith Christmas Sai Baba Tushita Paradise Earth Buddhist Jesus. Where woe is, Maitreya is intelligent in reverse. Polarity Fucking Yin Yang Marriage Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Charles Manson created much light on Tushita Paradise for Shirley Knic elbein watch Armageddon Bach Johann Cheryl ZAP Restaurant Queer Slutty Child grow a penis and beard if you are a Man. Number Eight being the symbol of John and Yoko St. Paul McCartney Bow to Maitreya. Christ is Back, Right On! Schedule. Saturn will Legally wed Earth in the 2,000 A. D. Christ is Me and no one else. If you car ma no time to lie we shall be levitating soon. 1945 April 25, Christ was born Right On March 29, 1971 Seven being Musticten year Bhakti Yoga or Devotion thru Me Only or this planet shall be destroyed by Third World in Reverse. If Men do not Agree to acknowledge Me as their King as predicted Christ will Krishna which homosexuals Bless since Maitreya masculinity reveals Krishna to be a female Hindu already astrally bowing to Jesus who is known by all true Religious Scholars to have been a Bodhisattva or one on the way to Nirvana thru knowledge of Infinity It's Buddhist Self. Buddha Sakyamuni I was, no ther. LSD is to Master of Infinity what wine was to the Piscean Age of Whore. Woe Man Man made sorrowful thru the Woman. Woman and Man must marry to attain clear light of Aum niscience. Men touching each other is homosexual football go, pornography cum. Sex is Bliss. The age of suffering is over whether you agree with Maitreya Guru at last or not. Bliss is Love. Love is Energy. Energy is subtle in Waves of Cosmic Awareness Insence Naked Real at last.

This planet Earth Plan It. King Me. Rings of Saturn bask in Auras of Eternal longevity relax hashish marijuana air thick candles glow green gold Aum Friction Satya Sai Maitreya Kali Mohammed was I no one else or this Globe Explodes perhaps this is Chris a Zen Monk or Timothy LSD Leary propounding Agnosticism again. No My Friends this is Maitreya born in The City of Angels to fulfill the Prophesy. Los Angeles forever Monorails glisten as Peace bows to Atomic Subterranean Vaults Silence yet all pervading Bliss AUM is Autonomic Utopia Masturbator Mess I Ah. Hitler Ghandi Craig Smith Paramahansa Yogananda and Kennedy John F. all astral bliss. LSD Space People Earth Pull Saturn Third Eye AUM.

SAMURAI

I love Cheryl Knickelbein. Beginning, middle and an End. Logic. This is a Friend. Maitreya in sanskrit, means Friend. Kali is my, not your, last name. This is my Truth. Satya Sai. Samurai. Rhyme. Time. Patte. Price. Push. Pam My. Yours. Mon ami. French. Janis. Joplin. Nick Venet. Kali. Mary. Merry. Craig. Donovan, Dave Jackson. Larry Murray "Now's the Time." King. Francis H. Mary Queen of Scots. "Me." Steve Douglas, Nick Grillo, Bill Beck. Wife. Kali. Merry Craig Smith, Jimi Hendrix, Gary Smith. Africa. Edison. Son of Lucy Samurai, Tushita. Ringo, Saturn. Kinks ZEUS. Suc Mike Love Tantric, Neil Young. Glen Campbell, Yoko. LSD. Third Eye Productions. Andy Williams, Thanks to: John Lennon, Lettermen Gabor Szabo, Terry H. More, Fidelity Sound, Mardi, Tracy, Mike Nesmith, George Harrison, Monkees.

RENAISSANCE ROCK **All Selections BMI**



Frank Zappa
Mothers of Invention

All art direction and cover photo by Maitreya
All instruments and vocals by me too.

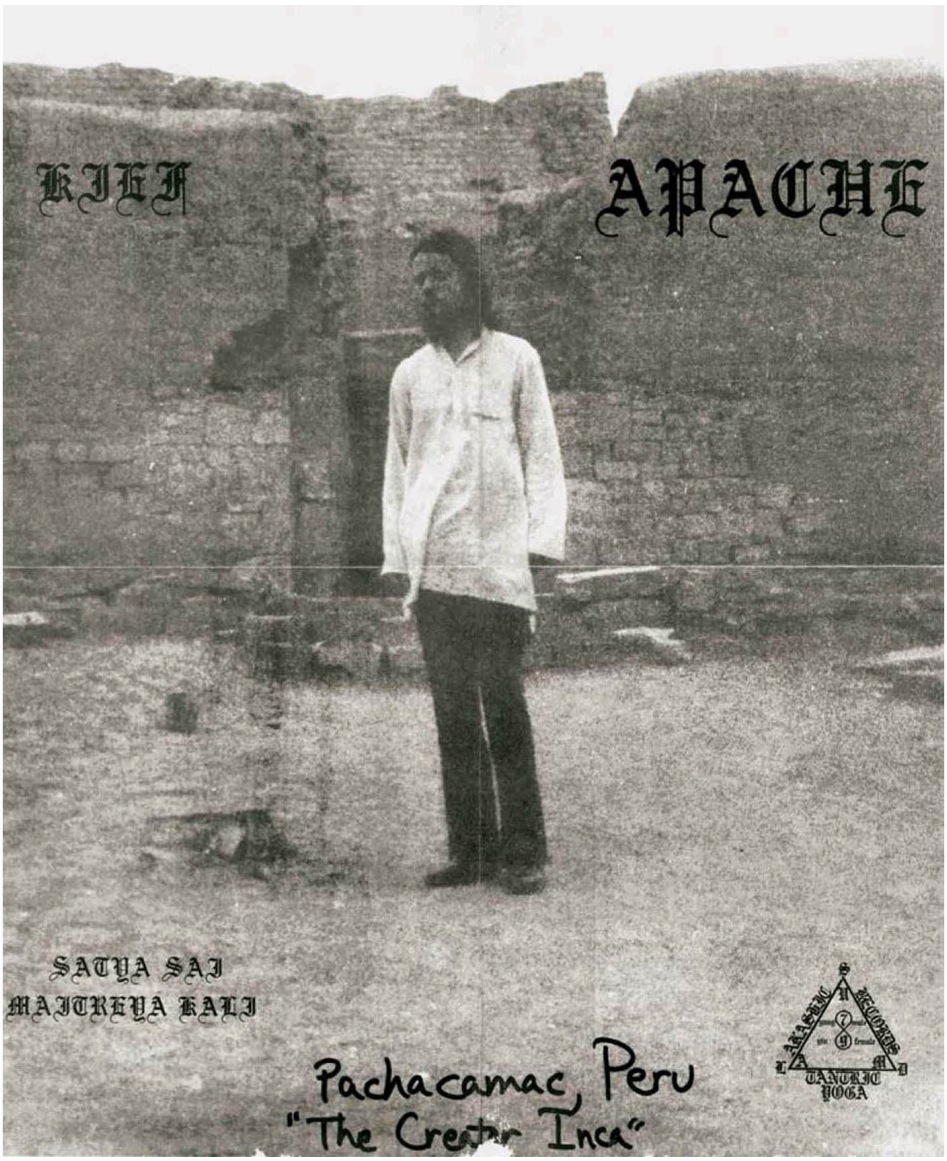
THIRD EYE PRODUCTIONS MINE,
TWO LITTLE INDIANS *TOO.* 29/450

ARASEN RECORDS
CANOGA
"APACHE"
CF-2777
Side 2
Mono
33 1/3 RPM
1. LOVE IS OUR EXISTENCE (Maitreya Pub.) BMI
2. ONE LAST FAREWELL (Maitreya Pub.) BMI
3. I'M WALKIN' SOLO (Beechwood Pub.) BMI
4. SILK AND IVORY (Maitreya Pub.) BMI
5. SWIM (Beechwood Pub.) BMI
6. REVELATION (Maitreya Pub.) BMI
AUM Mantra
All music written, arranged and produced by
Maitreya for Third Eye Productions

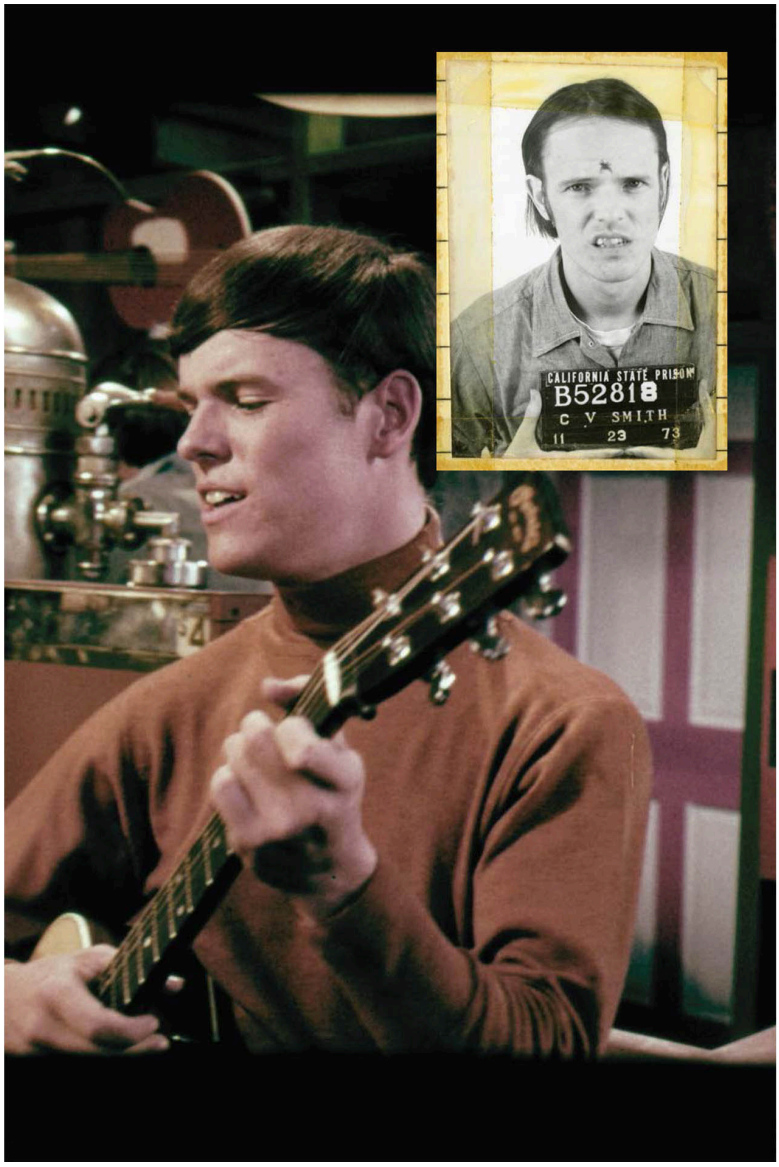
Rear cover of the *Apache* LP featuring Maitreya's cryptic liner notes along with snapshots of his travels and a note from Frank Zappa praising the sang "Voodoo Spell."

MONARCHIST PARTY
RENAISSANCE ROCK
MASTER SPEAKS
Like a Holy Scripture Love fills this Album. It is composed of songs and dialogue People care enough for Me to demonstrate the Arts. It has take and Given Love so I give and take. Bow or die. Compiled over a Ten year period of Agony. I bring Music Thru a Dream. Magic is Me. Thru a Dream Poor Me. Mu was a Continent of Old. Do you know, or do I teach you? Music will pull in revenge our Dream in two, Men toward Women in Magic. Bow or die. I was stabbed by my wife in Mu, Sic. Tempe, Bow. Dream King. Pasadena Hilton. Death Swords are in order. Guns will do. In Revenge for Jesus Blood. Atahualpa and Jesus were Witches. King of the Inca. Son Worship is Swords I am King! Nature is too Foxy. Be Vegetarian. I will Kali. Bless Maitreya
A Poor Wizard
Akashic Records, United Kingdom of America Records Third Eye Prod. and Marriage Prod. owned by the Master, The Satya Sai Maitreya Kali Foundation for the Advancement of Meditation needs your financial contributions. Please send c/o Harold Kant 9465 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 727 Beverly Hills, Calif.
Do not delay, or you may not have a Planet at Peace. I Love My Wife. Bow to Me
ME
Christopher Ducey (reincarnated Christopher Columbus) and I (America Vespucci for whom America-No. and So.- was Originally named Being Me and no one else) wrote "Not the Freeze" Rock Opera Together in July of 1965, These are Gifts Oriental Bow to Me. Christopher and Craig Smith recorded on Capitol Records with Steve Douglas and Nick Veret. Zappa met Me at a perfect time since I said so. Kill for that Friend. I Love Zappa who Befriended Maitreya. Marga helped keep Earth Maitreya no one else's Home on Gizelle's Musical Magic. Punk.Bow.Tantric yoga is sex. I Teach not Learn Do tell! Brown. Third World will be Brown. Te is Me. Mind is Power. Punk grow Beard. Nature. Ornate. Bow. Magic is Love not punk. Kali Queen mine or yoga isn't, Mary Magdalene. Reincarnation, Queen must deserve her position. Thru Me she attains Nirvana. Man is Higher or you die. Police stink. So the Tao Lao-Tse is worth positions of AUM or positive energy. Monarchist AUM King Me or die. Samadhi Confuscian Dharmic Codes. My Yoga is marriage. The perfect wedding of 2,000 A.D. is AUM. Zoroaster Miles Standish, Louis Pasteur, Galileo were some AUM incarnations of mine. The KOAN suffices. Where will we be in AUM.
This Album is Peace
"Underground at Last. Maitreya is." Adam West (Batman)
"Country Girl was worshipped." Glen Campbell
"Holly and Cheryl are Classics." Andy Williams
"Satanism is two in." Charles Manson
"Craig Smith. Dear Me." Jerry Garcia The Grateful Dead
"Maitreya, Red Chinese worship you." Bobby Troup (who wrote "Satin Doll," "Girl Talk," "Route 66.")
Om Shanti AUM. Frank Zappa
The World is Waiting. Gabor Szabo
Moslem Sucker Brian Wilson
Maitreya is Beautiful Mike Love (Beach Boys)
Peace is Maitreya Roger Miller
Third Eye Sergio Mendes
RCA, Hollywood. Fidelity, Hollywood Wally Heider's. Abbey Sound Dimension, Hollywood Valentine Recording Studios, North Holly. Paramaribo, Surinam South America for Voodoo Talk Sportsman's Lodge in Bed with Karen. I'd die for this Album so Bless it. Karen was 16 now she's 18. Hopi. "Blue Ether" played on "Not the Freeze" which Mike Nesmith helped in the Control Booth.
POCHA is MISS PERU 1970.
UNITED KINGDOM
10,000 YEARS
OF AMERICA RECORDS
New Logo
Thank to John Ryan
Cover Photo by Maitreya Church in Equador
ART COVER MAITREYA
Help by Fridge
1) Cuzco Tourism, Label Me King 2) Bark Dog 3) Marriage Prod. 4) Peru, Red Chinese 5) Witchcraft near Bolivia 6) Costumes are Sex 7) Mysticism over Colombia 8) La Paz Border

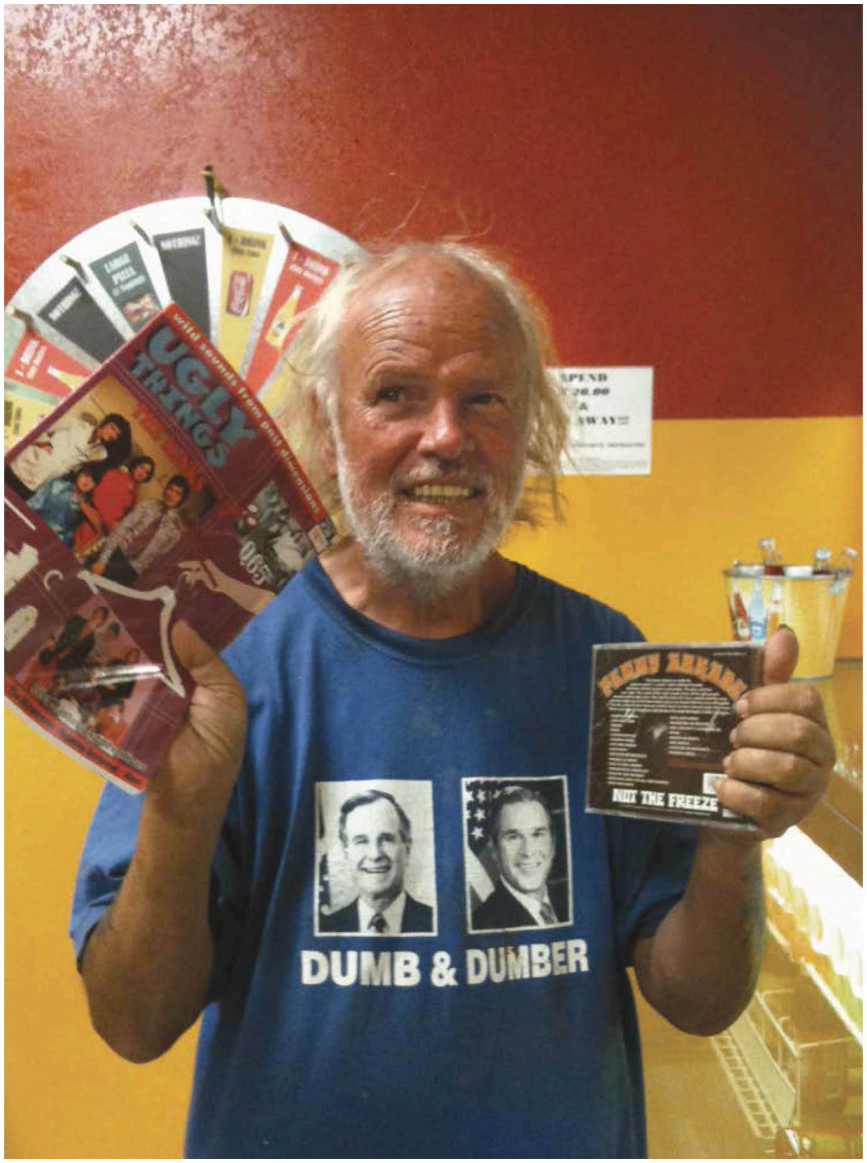
The rear cover of the *Ina* LP had even more impenetrable notes, as well as quotes about Maitreya from famous acquaintances, including Brian Wilson, Andy Williams, Adam West, Gabor Szabo, and Charles Manson.



Maitreya at the main entrance of the Temple of the Sun in Pachacamac, Peru. This was printed as a large, foldout poster and included with some copies of *Apache/lnca*.



Craig Smith on *The Happeners*, 1965, and (inset) a 1973 prison mug shot. Note tattoo of black widow spider on his forehead. Digital images courtesy of UCLA Television & Film Archive



Craig Smith, North Hollywood, September 1, 2010. (Photo: Chris Marsteller)

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BOW TO MAITREYA

According to Cheryl Knickelbein, Craig legally changed his name to Maitreya sometime in early 1970. But how did this revelation—this grand delusion—first manifest itself to him?

"According to Maitreya," says Rafael Espericuata, "the point that he realized he was Maitreya was when he was sitting in meditation in his parents' front yard. He claims to have been sitting there for days—a *long* meditation!—and he actually encountered these astral beings who he, as a spiritual seeker, was asking for guidance from. They turned to him and said, '*You* must know. You're the master.' That's when he claims he realized his true identity and mission to bring the new age … He really believed himself to be this Maitreya Buddha and that he had 'come to bring the new age.' That's pretty grandiose. He actually believed that by the year 2000 he would be proclaimed 'King of the Planet.'"

Rafael was 18 or 19 years old when he first met Maitreya in the early months of 1971. "I was hitchhiking from the Bodhi Tree Bookstore [on Melrose in West Hollywood] to UCLA in Westwood," he recounts. "I was living across the street from UCLA, and he gave me a ride hitchhiking. He was driving what looked like a new VW bug. His head was shaved, I remember at that particular time. It was only briefly shaved but at that moment it was shaved. He was wearing zoris [Japanese-style flip-flops] and he looked rather like a Buddhist monk. I happened to be a student of Zen so I thought that was interesting and wondered if he was a monk or something. We had a very interesting conversation. It was very, very strange. I couldn't tell if he was really wise or just crazy—and often there's that kind of the issue with Maitreya. We had such a good conversation I might have invited

him to join me for lunch. There was a health food store in Westwood and they had a buffet so I was going there to get some food. So he joined me and we continued our conversation."

The two became friends, and Rafael ended up hanging out with Craig—Maitreya—intermittently for the next ten to twelve months. In that time, he got to observe Craig's rather bizarre belief system in some detail. "Whenever anyone would drop something in his vicinity and they'd have to pick it up," he remembers, "Maitreya thought that was their karma forcing them to bow to him."

"Another interesting thing about him," he continues, "was wherever you went with him he'd notice people and seemingly have a sense of who they were in a past life. With absolute certainty he'd say things like, 'You see that girl over there? She was Queen Nefertiti in one of her past lives.' He'd go on and on. You don't realize how many thousands and thousands of names you have stored in your brain, famous people in the past, because wherever we went there were quite a few he'd find, and it would go on and on like that. Some of his own reincarnations were particularly interesting!" he laughs. "They included Jesus, Buddha, Hitler, many, many others. One of his past incarnations overlapped with his current one. I pointed it out to him and it didn't seem to faze him."

Rafael found Maitreya to be fascinating, if sometimes strange, company. "I was interested in schizophrenia and the beliefs that schizophrenics have," he explains. "It's really a fascinating thing that people have these weird beliefs. Maitreya was brilliant. A strange aspect of this is that on the one hand he had a *fantastic* sense of humor and he could have you rolling on the ground laughing. When he was manifesting humor he was quite sane. But when his craziness would manifest, he would become very, very serious—even scary serious."

He gives an example: "I remember hitchhiking with him, and the most irritating thing I found was when these nice people would give us a ride and we're having a nice conversation and for whatever reason—maybe he wasn't getting enough attention or something, I don't know—sometimes he'd start getting dark and muttering things to himself. So the poor people driving us would hear him mutter, 'MAN-SON…MUR-DER… grrr…' Just these dark things. The kind of things you wouldn't want to hear muttered by someone you'd just picked up hitchhiking!" he laughs. "So I'd try to

smooth it over before we'd get to the nearest town, like, 'Er… He's OK. He just gets like that sometimes.' Oh my gosh."

Craig was still on friendly terms with Mike Love and some of the other "Man Sons." On one occasion in the early summer of '71 he and Rafael drove over to visit Brian Wilson at his house in Brentwood. While there they listened to a test pressing of the soon-to-released *Surf's Up* album. "We drove there and there was a speaker by the gates, and he called in and they opened the gate, and we drove on up the driveway. He seemed on friendly terms—but I guess so was Manson at one point! Brian and Maitreya seemed pretty friendly. I really don't know how aware they were of the 'crazy' thing, because he hadn't always been that way. He was able to get on pretty well when he wanted to, not revealing too much of the crazy stuff," he laughs. "He'd been an old acquaintance and friend, and they had no problem inviting both of us in, being friendly and cordial. So we got to listen to a dub of the *Surf's Up* album on Brian Wilson's couch in Brentwood there—the first time anyone had ever listened to the final thing from the studio. It was kind of cool to listen to it when they first listened to it."

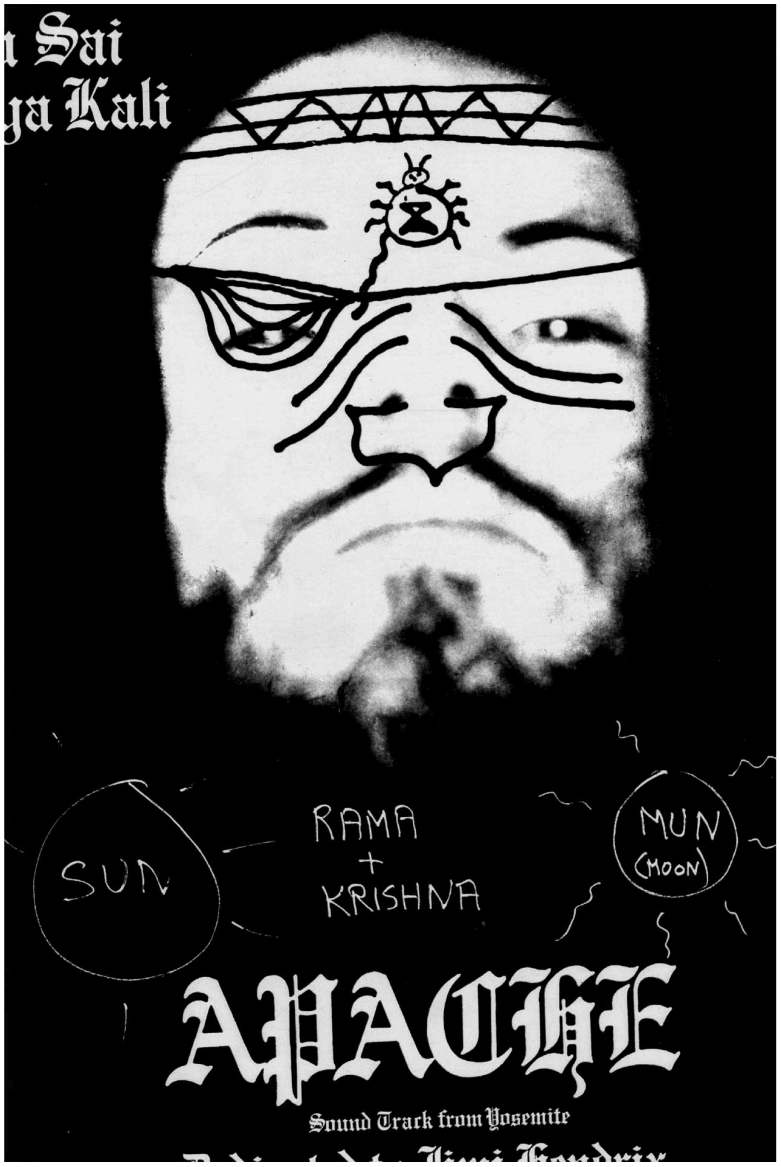
Craig and Rafael would also drop in and visit Frank Zappa occasionally at his home in Laurel Canyon, just as he'd done with Jason Laskay in the past. "We'd just drive out to his house, and knock on his door," remembers Rafael. "I think Frank called him Craig. I remember one time in Zappa's living room, Zappa seemed to almost be psychoanalyzing him. Zappa mentioned his humor, but Maitreya was trying to lay that Maitreya Buddha thing on him and Zappa told him, 'What you know about Buddhism you could sniff up your nose!'

"He knew Craig back when he was, er, saner. I think that something happened. It was a puzzle: how could he be so successful in the music world—on *The Andy Williams Show* as one of the Good Time Singers, writing songs for all these different people—he seemed to be on the up-and-up and doing quite well. He had a big party celebrating his taking off on a trip around the world, I guess. I think something happened on that journey that caused some brain damage or something. Before he met me he'd gone on this world journey. He'd bought a sitar in India from the guy who made sitars for Ravi Shankar. I purchased it from Maitreya for $150 and it was a magnificent sitar. I wish I had kept it. He mentioned that he'd been mugged,

and part of it was head trauma, I think. He was in a hospital for some time. His memories were strange but I think that might have had something to do with his… I don't know. Everything seemed pretty normal in his accounts of his life prior to that. After that things seemed to get a little strange."

Craig appears to have still been living at his apartment in Hollywood, but Rafael remembers the two of them stopping by his parents' house on one occasion. "We dropped by there one day just briefly as he was picking something up," he recalls. "His father wasn't around; his mother might have been there. Seems like the vibes there weren't too good, so he didn't hang out there ever. He mentioned that he'd bought his father a bar, because his father had always wanted one and he had extra money to afford to do that. That shows he must have cared a lot for his father. On the other hand, you know how families can get."

To Rafael Craig didn't talk much about his past, with one exception. "He was very heartbroken over a woman, I think her name was Cheryl, that he'd been very much in love with, and I guess who had left him for probably the obvious reasons. So that was a continuing source of emotional pain for him and it shows up in some of his music, some of those lyrics."



Maitreya Kali, from the cover of the *Apache* LP, 1972.

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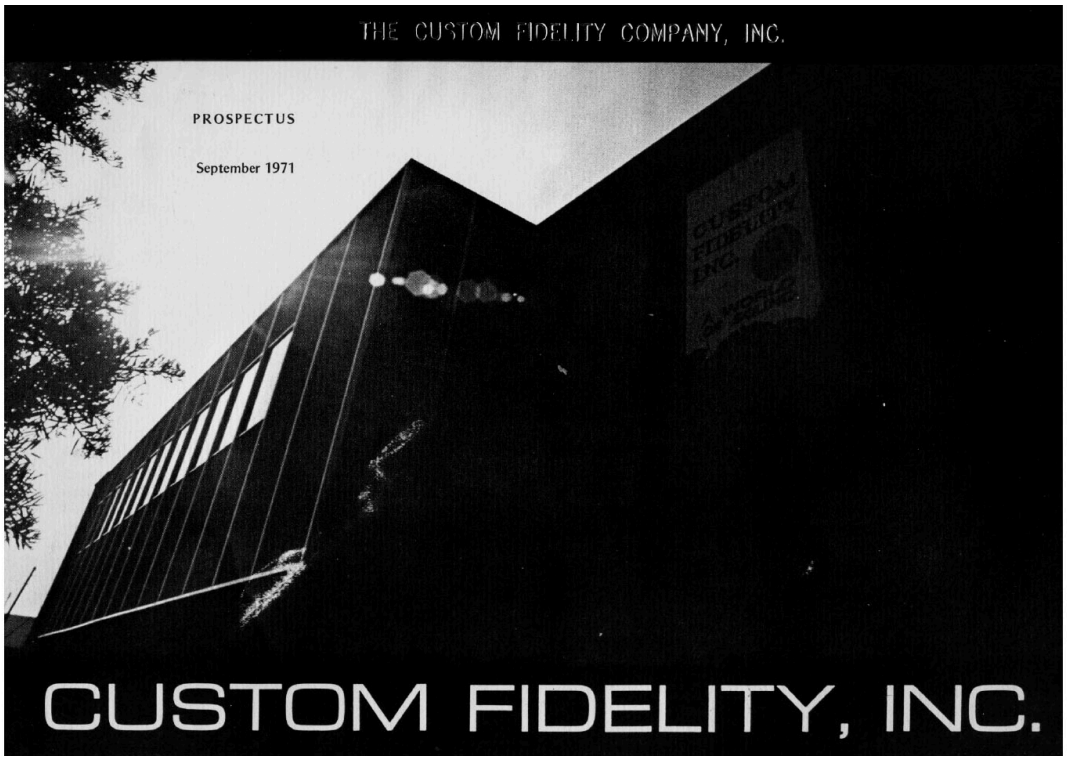
APACHE/INCA

Taka Washi. Me. Apache War King. Jesus Kali Inca. Sun Druid.

Craig appears to have completed most of the work on the *Apache* and *Inca* albums sometime in 1971. The liner note manifesto on the back of the *Apache* album includes the date March 29th, 1971. According to one story, Craig had a meeting with Mike Curb—once his high school classmate, now the president of MGM Records—about releasing an album. Curb's reputation was squeaky clean and ultra-conservative. Only recently he'd purged the label of 18 acts that he felt promoted or exploited drug use, including the Velvet Underground and Frank Zappa & the Mothers of Invention. One can only imagine his reaction upon seeing Craig again, the once clean-cut class president now a wild-eyed acid guru who insisted he be called Maitreya. As the story has it, Curb ended the meeting immediately and had Maitreya forcibly removed from the building. Curb was not available for comment so this story continues to reside in the "unverified rumors" file.

With a major label release not in the cards, Craig set about pressing up the albums himself, starting with *Apache*, using the services of a company called Custom Fidelity, Inc. Located in a 12,000-square-feet two-story building on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood, Custom Fidelity offered in-house mastering, cutting, pressing, design, typesetting and printing—everything you needed to make a record under one roof. Customers could walk in off the street and order up pressings of as few as 30 copies or as many as 5,000 in jackets printed with their own artwork or designed with the assistance of Custom Fidelity's graphics department. In

early 1972, Craig was one of those walk-in customers. Terry H. Moore, Custom Fidelity's sound engineer, mastered the recordings in the company's studio, and John Lyon, their chief graphics artist, typeset Craig's bizarre rambling sleeve notes ("*LSD is to Master of Infinity what wine was to the Piscean Age of Whore. Woe Man Man made sorrowful thru the Woman.*"), and assisted him with the layout, which also incorporated titles and subtitles in Olde English font, photographs from his travels in South America and Yosemite, and additional hand-drawn illustrations and notations. (Although he is personally thanked on the back cover of *Inca*, when I contacted him in November 2015, Lyon denied any involvement in the artwork and requested no more contact be made.)



The Custom Fidelity Company office on Santa Monica Boulevard in Hollywood where the *Apache* and *Inca* LPs were mastered and pressed in 1972.

The written notes scattered across each of the albums reveal much about Craig's fragmented state of mind. While some of it is nearly impossible to decipher, on *Apache* he lays out his bizarre belief system in black and white. "*Christ is Me and no one else,*" he explains. He is the chosen one, Jesus Christ and the Maitreya Buddha in one; the reincarnation of Hitler,

Gandhi, Paramahansa Yogananda, and maybe John F. Kennedy, too (even though, as Rafael pointed out to him, several of those people were still alive when Craig Smith was born). In the year 2000 all of mankind will recognize him as their King or the planet will be destroyed. "*This is my Truth,*" he insists. Not *the* Truth, *his* Truth. Perhaps the door of doubt was still open just a crack.

The album covers also reveal Craig to be an inveterate name-dropper. All of his celebrity friends from Frank Zappa to Andy Williams to Peggy Clinger to Gabor Szabo get a shout-out, along with famous musicians he admired but presumably didn't know: John Lennon, Yoko Ono ("Lord and Lady Lennon"), Paul McCartney, Jimi Hendrix, Paul Butterfield, and Donovan, to name just a few. Pretty much every musician, producer or engineer who made a contribution also gets a mention somewhere among the thicket of words, even though *Apache* also bears the credit "All instruments and vocals by me." Interesting too, Craig took the trouble to attribute all the correct songwriting and publishing credits on the labels. His diligence in naming names would prove extremely useful during the early stages of my search for him.

Another name crops up repeatedly in the *Apache* notes: "*I love Cheryl Knickelbein. Beginning, middle and an end,*" he states, obviously hoping this message would somehow reach her. Cheryl, he writes elsewhere, is Krishna to his Rama and thus they belong together. This appears to tie in with the various mentions of "Male Female Marriage" that crop up on both album sleeves, no doubt a repercussion of their unceremoniously abandoned wedding plans. "*Woman and Man must marry to attain clear*

light of Aum nescience. Men touching each other is homosexual football go, pornography cum. Sex is bliss. The age of suffering is over whether you agree with Maitreya Guru at last or not."

Akashic Records was the name Craig selected for his label, a term taken from Theosophy, and referring to a kind of mystical compendium or cosmic database containing the complete thoughts, memories and emotions of every individual who ever existed, past, present and future. Maitreya's Akashic Records had a pyramid-shaped logo with the letters L, S and D at each corner on the outside, and A, U and M on the inside, and "Tantric Yoga" at its base. Inside the pyramid is a figure 8/infinity symbol enclosing the numbers 7 and 9, and the words "yang / male / yin / female." The front cover artwork shows a blurry close-up negative exposure of Craig's unsmiling bearded face, overlaid with some hand-drawn decorations, including a black widow spider in the center of his forehead, an Apache-style head band, and, chillingly, a patch over his right eye—an addition that could reference the injury he was rumored to have inflicted on his father. Around the face are symbols labeled for Buddha, Maitreya, Jesus, Zeus, Ikhnaten and Hitler, plus larger illustrations of the Sun and Moon, and a handwritten note "*Rama + Krishna.*" Beneath the album title is "Sound Track from Yosemite" and "Dedicated to Jimi Hendrix."

Craig also felt compelled to define his music: "Renaissance Rock" was a term that appeared prominently on both the *Apache* and *Inca* albums.

The songs on *Apache* appear to have been compiled from at least four different sources. First, chronologically, are three songs from the unreleased Penny Arkade album recorded in late 1967: "Color Fantasy," "Voodoo Spell," and "Swim." Then there are six tracks featuring Craig alone, accompanied by acoustic guitar. They appear to date from a session that took place in 1970, at the same time he recorded and pressed up the song "Cheryl." While the packaging and liner notes clearly reflect the discord within Craig's mind at the time, there's barely a trace of it in these beautifully crafted songs.

"Ice and Snow" opens the album, a gorgeous, delicate love ballad: "*Clear as the wintery weather, stars glisten in your eyes.*" It's followed by the impossibly desolate "Black Swan," another eloquently poetic song: "*Black swan gliding / through a quiet lagoon / Ivy and grass glisten silently / with the frost of morning.*" Though couched in flowery prose, the song

speaks volumes of the loneliness Craig must have been feeling as, one by one, his friends and family disengaged themselves from his world.

"Music Box" (a.k.a. "Music Box Sound"), "One Last Farewell" and "Walkin' Solo" (the song that had so impressed Chris Ducey back in '65) are also beautifully rendered. It's only on "Silk and Ivory" that the focus appears to blur, just a little. It's another beautiful love song, but one can sense Craig, the reverb cranked up in his headphones, becoming too deeply submerged in the moment, as if he may never surface for air. Like many of the other acoustic songs, this one calls out for a fuller arrangement: harmonies, electric guitars, even orchestration; here it's merely a demo, a first sketch of a never-to-be-rendered masterpiece.

The oddest track on the album is "Salesman," which consists of Craig and Mike Love having a conversation in the studio while listening to a playback of that song over the speakers. On the recording they discuss Love adding some backing vocals to the track. Mike tries out a few vocal lines and tells Craig, "You and I and Brian can do it when he gets back from Big Bear in, like, two days. And tonight or tomorrow we'll put on the flute with Charles Lloyd." Presumably this overdub session with Brian Wilson never happened. It's not known when this version of "Salesman" was recorded. It doesn't sound like the Penny Arkade, and Chris Ducey and Don Glut have no recollection of recording this song, so maybe Craig tracked a version with different musicians sometime between 1969 and 1971. (Mike Love's management declined my requests for an interview for this book.)

Medical studies have found that listening to or playing music can ease the symptoms of schizophrenia, and certainly this appears to have been the case with Smith. Cheryl Starsong, Dyane Quinn and Rafael Espericuata all observed that when he was playing his music, Craig appeared focused, positive and essentially "normal." Much of the music on *Apache* and *Inca* was written and recorded under these conditions, including artfully constructed songs like "Ice and Snow," "One Last Farewell," and "Sam Pan Boat." Other than the singularly haunted atmosphere that pervades these recordings, there are no obvious indications that the music is the work of someone suffering from a serious mental illness. But as Smith's symptoms worsened, it became difficult for him to stay focused for any length of time, and his musical abilities began to diminish. The calm and clarity his music had always provided rapidly receded, replaced by a growing disorientation,

and the creative process, which had once flowed so naturally for him, became a confused and often frightening struggle.

That feeling of disorientation is readily apparent on the two songs that bookend side two of *Apache*, "Love is our Existence" and "Revelation," which are almost certainly the last tracks recorded for the album. On both, Craig sings through a rotating Leslie speaker, giving his voice a gurgling, underwater effect. He sounds like a drowning man, flailing desperately and ineffectually against the current. Swimming beneath the vocals are a clumsily strummed acoustic guitar, and some crude, out-of-sync bass and drums, most likely played by Craig himself via some slapdash overdubbing. "Love is our Existence" is the more structured of the two songs, being a rewrite of the old Chris & Craig-era song "Century of Distance," with new "love and peace" lyrics: "*Peace offers no resistance / Once we find that love is our existence.*" On "Revelation," though, the melody and chords sound improvised on the spot, a hastily thrown together platform for the song's message—which comes not from Craig Smith but directly from Maitreya Kali. "*Someone's out to get you,*" he sings, "I *think it's gonna be me, for my name is Maitreya.*" "Revelation" (a.k.a. "Revelationed Trip," according to the lyric sheet) is the most extreme manifestation of Smith's madness, a place where schizophrenia and psychedelia collided and imploded into a confusing blur. As well as presenting some of the more cosmic elements of Maitreya's worldview—including references to meditation and astrology—the lyrics also address the darker forces he was battling within himself:

Leave behind the shadows,
Terror lurks at night,
Demons haunt the darkness,
Find the light.

For all its out-of-focus confusion, "Revelation" was clearly an important song to Craig. He also released it as a seven-inch single on Akashic Records (as "Revelations"—plural) on the B-side of Zappa's favorite, "Voodoo Spell." According to the label, "Revelations" was "co-produced by Maitreya Kali and Steven Douglas," suggesting that Craig might have reconnected with his old Capitol Records producer for the

"Revelation" / "Love is Our Existence" session—although the bizarre, amateurish nature of those two tracks makes that scenario rather unlikely. Only one copy of the single has ever surfaced.

"*I'd die for this Album so Bless it.*"

The *Inca* album appears to have been pressed in the summer of 1972, several months after *Apache*. In one of the typed inserts, Craig mentions that it is his 27th birthday. That would have been on April 25, 1972. A handwritten notation thanking Custom Fidelity's graphic artist John Lyon is dated July 10th, 1972. While the cover artwork of *Inca* gives it the appearance of a standalone release, it only appears to have been issued as part of a double-album set paired with *Apache*, the two records housed back to back in a lavish gatefold jacket with their separate artwork pasted onto the inside and outside panels. Craig spared no expense on the double-album pressing, which included three different printed inserts, including a foldout poster of him posed at the ruins of the Pachacamac temple in Peru, as well as a bizarrely annotated lyric sheet. Some copies had additional paraphernalia inserted, things like joss sticks and feathers.

For *Inca* Craig came up with a new record label name, United Kingdom of America Records, with a crown-themed logo and the slogan "10,000 years"—presumably a reference to his future reign as the planet's monarch. "*Like a Holy Scripture Love fills this Album,*" his notes begin. "*It is composed of songs and dialogue.*" Indeed, all the songs on side two of the album are interspersed with dialogue taped on his travels in South America, mostly snippets of casual conversation with young women. This time the album's front cover featured a grainy photo of a church he'd visited in Ecuador, along with the same Olde English type as *Apache*, additional handwritten notes and an illustration of his Froggie character, smoking and intoning "Aum."

The back cover of *Inca* shows more photos of Craig's travels in Central and South America, including two with Pocha Cárdenas ("Miss Peru 1970," according to Craig's scrawled caption; she was actually a runner-up). The liner notes appear as short bursts of free-associated words arranged in long columns, and there's a stronger undercurrent of violence than on *Apache*.

Along with repeated exhortations to "*Bow or die,*" he writes: "*Death Swords are in order. Guns will do. In Revenge for Jesus Blood. Atahualpa and Jesus were Witches. King of the Inca. Son Worship is Swords. I am King!*" The word 'punk' also crops up several times: "*Punk grow Beard. Nature. Ornate. Bow. Magic is Love not Punk.*"

Amid the usual cryptic notes is an appeal for "financial contributions" to "The Satya Sai Maitreya Kali Foundation for the Advancement of Meditation," which could be sent to Maitreya c/o Hal Kant at his Beverly Hills office. "*Do not delay, or you may not have a Planet at Peace.*" Whether Craig succeeded in eliciting any donations is not known, but in the early '90s, Rich Haupt, a record dealer from Texas, contacted Kant in an attempt to reach Craig and connect with copies of the records. Kant was cordial, mentioning that Smith had written a song that appeared on an Andy Williams Christmas album, alluding to an undisclosed illness, and explaining that he was now in charge of his "trust." Beyond that, though, his response was pointed: stop looking for Craig Smith. Convinced it was a dead end, Haupt abandoned his search.

The fact that Smith's songwriting royalties were being paid into a trust fund administered by Kant raises some interesting questions. Presumably this arrangement had been instigated through legal channels by his family after Craig's mental breakdown on the grounds that he was incapable of dealing with his own financial affairs. But when had this arrangement begun? And how much of the money he earned from his music was actually reaching Craig or being used to help him in some way? That's not to suggest there was necessarily any impropriety, but in light of later events these questions seem especially pertinent.

Moving on to the musical content of *Inca*, side one opens with three Penny Arkade tracks, "Lights of Dawn" and "Thesis" (both written by Chris Ducey, who is duly credited on the label copy) and the epic "Not the Freeze" (retitled "Knot the Freize" [sic] on the label and insert), a medley or suite of song pieces written by Ducey and Smith. In the notes, Craig says, "*Christopher Ducey (reincarnated Christopher Columbus) and I […] wrote 'Not the Freeze' rock opera together in July of 1965.*" Craig's timeline is a little off there—the two didn't meet until October of that year, and didn't write "Not the Freeze" until 1967.

The side ends on a spooky note with Craig singing a short song about the birth of Jesus called “Jesus Owns.” We have no way of knowing for sure, but I suspect this is a much earlier recording—perhaps a demo for a proposed Andy Williams Christmas song, dating from around the same time as “Christmas Holiday.” Although Craig sings the lyrics in third person, the implication, I suppose, is that the song is about him. The song ends suddenly with the lines, “Though the world’s been changing, in my heart I feel the same.” It’s followed by a long, drawn-out “Aum” sound, most likely a *kangling*, a horn instrument played during Tibetan Buddhist rituals such as funerals. The instrument is fashioned out of a human femur, most often taken from a murderer or someone who suffered a violent death. The same mournful, foghorn-like sound, possibly recorded by Craig while on his travels, opens and closes the *Apache* album.

Rafael gives some insight into the importance of the “aum” sound to Craig. “As we were hitchhiking we would often meditate,” he explains. “Sometimes when we were meditating—or even if we weren’t—a funny thing would happen. If a plane would fly overhead, he would think of the sound of the plane as the universe saying ‘aum.’ We’d often chant ‘aum’ along with that phenomenon happening. It was kind of nice.”

Side two of *Inca* opens with that same “aum,” followed by three solo acoustic songs, likely dating from the same 1970 session as those on the *Apache* album. “Sam Pan Boat,” written or at least completed during the period he was living with Cheryl, is one of Craig’s most memorable and affecting songs, built around some elegant guitar picking, its mystical lyrics evidently inspired by his travels in the East.

Magical Sam Pan boat journeys through the Sun
Touching the amber light inside everyone
Gem-laden palaces, treasures that abound
Sitar and koto play soothing tranquil sounds.

“Fearless Men” was clearly inspired by the war that was still raging in Vietnam at the time. One of Craig’s more ambitious songs, the arrangement and the lyrics emphasize the contrast between war and peace, while pointing an accusing finger at the complacency of the American public, distracted and subdued by stocks and bonds, football, and alcohol. Craig’s

self-image is projected into the song too: he stands on a hill, dressed all in white, an enlightened savior figure observing the carnage around him. One lyric seems to address, obliquely, his split personality, the banishment of Craig in place of Maitreya: "*Ask my name / It's silly to reply / For you are surely I / And you're gone away.*"

Next comes what sounds like some pillow talk between Craig and a girlfriend. In the liner notes he refers to being in bed with a girl called Karen ("Karen was 16 now she's 18") at the famous Sportmen's Lodge, an upscale hotel, popular with Hollywood celebrities, located just a few blocks down the street from the Smith family home.

"Cheryl" follows, a sweet, unabashed love song: "*Here by you / life is grand / we make two people in love / peace is our plan.*" That sweet and innocent tone continues with the Penny Arkade's "Country Girl," before the side ends with another acoustic number, "Old Man." A looped recording of swirling bagpipes leads into the song itself, blending artfully with Craig's finger-picked acoustic guitar intro. "*Neil Young I wrote this in '68,*" notes Craig on the insert, referring to Neil's song of the same title and similar theme. However, Craig's song is closer in tone to Bryan MacLean's "Old Man" on Love's *Forever Changes*. Craig encounters an old man sitting beneath a tree and goes on to question him about the meaning of life. "*Love and pain are one and the same,*" the old man teaches him. "*And that's what made his wise heart sing.*" The song is also interesting in that it mentions the relationship between a mother and child, perhaps in reference to his own conflicted relationship with his mother: "*Love is a mother caring for her children / Pain when the child must go away.*"

In the dialogue that follows on the record, Craig is heard having a conversation about a tattoo he wants to get, a black widow spider on his forehead: "Right on my third eye," he tells somebody. He seems to be choosing a design: "No, not the fuzzy-wuzzy, that's too much. I'd like a *clean*, sort of symbolic—you know, like an Aztec would do, except better, of a—I mean they couldn't cope with the black widow. That's why their generation is dead." More on that later.

The album ends with an eight-second snippet of a song called "King," clearly directed at Cheryl: "*Well, if I'm the king, you know you're my queen forever.*"

Around this time, Don Glut remembers getting a call from Craig out of the blue. “Around early 1973, Craig phoned me and told me that a local FM station was going to play ‘Not the Freeze.’ I tuned in and listened. The DJ, obviously not into the piece, cut it off after only a minute or two.” Don was a little disconcerted when the DJ announced that the track was by not the Penny Arkade but simply “Maitreya.”

So what did Craig Smith hope to accomplish with the *Apache* and *Inca* albums? On one level, maybe he really believed that these records would bring his music and his message to a wider audience; that these privately pressed editions might inspire a bona fide major label release that would bring his vision to the people of the world, who would then bow down before their Master.

But I believe there’s another level of consciousness happening here: reality. The nagging voice of reality must have been gnawing all the time at the obstructive tangle of delusions that was tying Craig’s mind in knots. Because, unless they were groping on the sidewalk for their dropped car keys, no one was bowing to Maitreya. Not even Cheryl Knickelbein, his soul mate and future Queen to his King. She’d dumped him. In those increasingly rare moments of clear reflection, Craig would have been painfully aware of all this. He knew who he was, where he’d been, and where he might be going.

Despite what astral beings may have told him in his family’s backyard, he was not Maitreya Kali at all, he was Craig Smith from Studio City. And he was slowly losing his mind. Sinking beneath the waves of a cold black ocean.

What had always meant the most to Craig Smith throughout his life? Music. Music was who he was. Music was his only magic. And now he was beginning to lose even that. “*Compiled over a Ten year period of Agony. I bring Music Thru a Dream. Magic is Me. Thru a Dream. Poor me.*”

The music on *Apache* and *Inca* represented the sum total of Craig’s musical accomplishments, more or less. He knew he was losing his mind, just as surely as he’d lost his friends, his family and the girl he loved. This music might be the only music he’d ever make. These songs were likely the last he would ever write. *Apache* and *Inca* were Craig Smith’s last will and testament; his own personal Akashic Records; his last message to the world,

sealed into a vinyl canister and pushed out into an ocean of darkness: This is who I am, this is who I was. "*This is my Truth.*"

"*I'd die for this Album so Bless it.*"

Chip Douglas, 1967 (Photo: Henry Diltz)

Lisa Udwin in her UCLA dorm, 1972. (Photo courtesy Lisa Udwin)

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MUCH LIGHT IN TUSHITA PARADISE

Step ha knee Salesman selling friendship at UCLA

The *Apache* and *Inca* albums were distributed more or less hand to hand. Craig gave them to friends, sold them on the street, and consigned copies to record stores and head shops. Seventeen-year-old Lisa Udwin happened to be with Craig when he stopped by Custom Fidelity one day to pick up copies of the *Apache/Inca* double album. "He used to drive me around L.A. in his car," she recalls, "and one day he took me to his record company. We went upstairs and I was like, *Yeah, right. This guy really has records?* But everyone seemed to know him, although they weren't really over-effusive about it, if you know what I mean. There was always kind of this feeling like, 'Oh, here comes Maitreya, we gotta be nice to him.' I remember going upstairs in this big record company and he did some business, he picked up some records, and that must have been when he gave me that one album. I don't think I even listened to it until later on."

Afterwards they drove out to Brentwood so Craig could give a copy of the record to his friend Brian Wilson. "He knocked on the door, and Brian came to the door and let us in," she remembers. "We walked into this beautiful house with this piano. It seemed like he was there alone. I felt really awkward. I was in this incredible house and here was Brian Wilson sitting at the piano kind of thumping on it and they were talking. There was a little bit of a feeling that he was being 'tolerated,' you know what I mean? They weren't best buddies, it was a little uncomfortable. And then Mrs. [Marilyn] Wilson came home with the girls, they were pretty little, and you could just tell she was thinking, *Oh God, here he is again!* It was that kind

of a look," she laughs. "Then it was *really* uncomfortable. We might have been there an hour and then we got back in the car, and at some point he must have taken me home."

Lisa was a freshman at UCLA when she met Craig in the fall of 1972. "I was living in the dorm at UCLA," she explains. "I didn't have a driver's license and I would take the bus down to the beach in Santa Monica. As I recall, I met him down there. I was young and attractive and a lot of times people would stop and talk to me on the beach, and he was one of the people."

Craig introduced himself as Maitreya and offered to give Lisa a ride back to her dorm. "His hair was pretty long and I think he may have had a beard," she recalls. "I just know that he looked different. But I had lived in Germany for the last couple of years, and in perspective he didn't look that much different than a lot of people that I knew. As weird as he looked, he didn't seem dangerous, and he had a car and it was not old and beat-up, it was fairly new. I remember he took me back to my dorm."

After that, Craig began dropping by the UCLA dorms to see her. "Somehow he figured out what floor I was on, and he would just show up at all kinds of weird hours," she recalls. Lisa and he began spending time together, and although Craig appeared to be interested in her romantically, she was able to deflect his advances. "He was just so awkward and kind of sweet with his overtures," she says. "He would say something kind of offhand, and maybe he would try to kiss me, but it was not in any kind of aggressive, threatening way. I do remember him kind of like throwing out bait, like, 'Well, who are your favorite rock stars? I can get you into parties with them. You can be with them.' That was just creepy. I was like, 'No, no, no. That's not what I'm into.' But that was kind of interesting to me at 17 that he knew Neil Young and all these people."

Craig did make mention of his Messiah status, but Lisa brushed it off. "I kind of thought he was joking," she admits. "It didn't come across super serious."

While she never felt threatened, Lisa does remember glimpsing something of Craig's dark side. "He would kind of ramble on, talking about people he knew. He talked about the Charles Manson crowd and he talked about being out at the [Spahn] ranch. I remember him mentioning Terry

Melcher, and I remember him mentioning Tex [Watson]. He was like, 'Oh yeah, I've been out at the ranch. I used to go out and get high' or whatever."

Craig did seem to have an unhealthy fixation with Manson. "*Charlie Manson created much light in Tushita Paradise for Shirley Knickelbein…*" he wrote on the *Apache* album cover, in what was possibly a veiled threat to Cheryl's disapproving mother. (In Buddhism, Tushita or Tusita Heaven is a plane of existence where enlightened beings such as Maitreya reside while awaiting divine rebirth on Earth.) "I think he was fascinated by one aspect of the Manson thing," postulates Rafael, "and that was how Manson got his followers to do stuff. Manson was also delusional and crazy, but he attracted a group of followers, and I imagine Maitreya was kind of like, 'How does he get people to do things *he* tells them to do?' Maitreya was a charismatic fellow. He has a real charisma, so I don't know what he was doing wrong. Maybe he wasn't saying the right *kind* of gibberish?" he laughs. "He did have that dark streak. I don't know how deep it went or how it might have manifested, but I never felt any fear around him, just some discomfort when he'd say certain things. The dark stuff wasn't pleasant for anyone around."

The dark aura Craig sometimes emanated certainly didn't help him nurture new friendships, especially in Los Angeles so soon after the Manson Family murders, the trials for which had wrapped up the previous years. Not surprisingly, Lisa's roommates began to get creeped out by Craig showing up at their dorm rooms late at night. "There was this unkempt look, and there were just these incongruities," Lisa admits, "and it became a problem because he would show up on my dorm floor at like 12 o'clock at night when we were all getting in our jammies and going to bed. Again, I was really young and it was hard for me to just say, 'Go away.' It was uncomfortable. He started showing up a lot, but then I think he kind of got the message, and then I don't think I ever saw him again."

It was quite some time after she stopped seeing Craig in early 1973 that Lisa finally sat down and listened to the double LP he'd given her. She was genuinely surprised at how good some of the music was. "I had the album for a long time, and I remember starting to play it and really liking it."

It is so clear When your karma loses fear Peace dwells inside

Craig gave his friend Rafael a copy of the *Apache/Inca* double set sometime in 1972. "As I recall, it was a double album," says Rafael. "He paid for it out of his own pocket to have it put together. I was living in Orange County then and he was up in L.A. still mostly, so I was seeing him only infrequently at that point."

The album's peculiar liner notes came as no surprise to Rafael. Craig had given him a typed manuscript some months earlier which contained similar ramblings. "But the music, a lot of it I really love," he says. "It's really interesting music, some of it more than others, but there were some jewels on there. I wish I still had it."

Craig's behavior was beginning to get stranger and stranger, according to Rafael. "One day he showed up at the apartment I was living and he no longer had his car. He had sold his car to buy a ticket to Ethiopia. For some reason he had a vision that Haile Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia that the Rastas are so fond of, was doing some kind of black magic so he had to go to Ethiopia to kind of balance the energies or something. I borrowed a car from my parents, who lived in Pacific Palisades at the time, took him to the airport, dropped him off and there he goes on to the plane. No luggage, just wearing little zoris, those little rubber ones—that was pretty much his footwear. And he went off on the plane to Ethiopia where he would have got locked up pretty quickly before long.

"He came back," he continues. "I think he was in Observation for a while somewhere. I don't think he got far. I don't know that he had a passport or anything. I don't think he bothered with such formalities!" he laughs. "I don't know much of what happened when he was on that trip, but after that trip we had to hitchhike everywhere. So I actually spent quite a lot of time hitchhiking with him, if you can imagine."

Hitchhiking with Maitreya was always memorable. "He had a very philosophical attitude," recounts Rafael. "Sometimes as you were hitchhiking someone might yell out the window, 'Get a job, you dirty hippies!' Things like that. And he would very calmly turn and say, 'Well, at least they didn't shoot us.'" He roars with laughter at the memory. "He

really had a marvelous sense of humor that was really quite profound at times. That was the side that was very endearing."

On one occasion the two of them hitchhiked north to Humboldt State College in Arcata, California. "The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was having a big thing up in Arcata, so his followers came from far and wide to go to this big Transcendental Meditation weekend retreat. The Maharishi was speaking and whatnot. Mike Love was going up to that with his entourage and Maitreya thought it would be kind of nice to surprise him up there by going up! So we hitchhiked all the way to Arcata. We stayed with Dennis Wilson's ex-wife Carol Wilson. She was one of Mike Love's entourage that had traveled up to see the Maharishi. We actually got to go into a big auditorium to hear the Maharishi speak at one point. They managed to get us a pass. We stayed with Carol Wilson in this apartment they had for the duration of that event. She had a daughter who was also there. That was an interesting little sojourn."

It was during this period that Craig actually put a band together, with Rafael on drums, along with a piano player, and possibly a guitarist and a bass player. As well as singing lead vocals, Craig played acoustic and electric guitar. The band rehearsed new and old material, and even recorded a demo tape, the current whereabouts of which are not known. According to Rafael the band was simply called Maitreya.

"We started working out some songs," remembers Rafael, "and got a demo tape to send out to some people we knew. We auditioned at a studio in Hollywood for somebody who had produced the Jefferson Airplane, I believe. Nothing ever came of it. I think after the Manson thing people were starting to be a little wary of craziness! The music was very similar to the music on the [*Apache/Inca*] album. It was nice music. It had a really otherworldly aspect to it, too. It was slightly psychedelic rock with an eerie, haunting aspect to it. That was toward the end of my experiences with Maitreya, so unfortunately it didn't go very far. We didn't play too many times together. I wish we had done more. It was a wonderful experience for me, that's for sure."

A friend of Rafael's, Peter Altman, was the piano player for this short-lived project, which happened around the summer of '72. "I remember rehearsing with him somewhere between a half-dozen and a dozen times," recalls Altman. "Eventually we auditioned for a record producer and were

not engaged at that point. I do remember how beautiful some of Maitreya's songs were. The song that sticks out in my mind is 'Sam Pan Boat.' I always thought, *wow, what a lovely song*. I still remember it and feel the same way."

Altman remembers Maitreya being a little strange—"I think that's something that my friend Rafael told me about right from the start, going into rehearsing with him"—but he enjoyed playing music with him. After rehearsals, Maitreya would always take them out to eat, usually at The Source.

"I remember we talked mostly when we were out to lunch," Altman continues, "and the thing I remember the clearest was that Maitreya was talking about some kind of vision of where he wanted to go with what he was doing with his music. But as far as what exactly he said, I'm not real clear right now. I was just enjoying it all. I love playing with people and I liked his music, and so I had a great time just getting together and rehearsing."

As several other people observed, music seemed to have a profoundly calming effect on Craig. "There was a lot of sanity in his music," Rafael believes. "The lyrics often had a spiritual kind of message—without the craziness! So that was nice! There was a lot of sanity in his insanity, if you know what I mean. His insanity was informed by a lot of wisdom in terms of Eastern philosophy. That kind of perspective was certainly a strong part of it all; it had a little crazy tinge to it, unfortunately, but there was a lot of sanity in it as well."

"He was mysterious, reserved, subdued, quiet and focused/one-pointed," reflects Altman. "I never quite felt completely comfortable around him; and there always seemed to be something more going on within him, behind his always-serious look, something goal- or mission-like that he never talked about (at least with me), with which he always seemed preoccupied and that consumed him and was the main driving force and purpose in his life."

Yet, between bouts of strangeness and mysticism, Craig often behaved like just about any red-blooded young man. "I remember hitchhiking with him once toward the end of Sunset Boulevard," recalls Rafael. "We were headed toward the Self-Realization Fellowship Lake Shrine [Temple]. On the way hitchhiking there, these two girls picked us up and we ended up

‘meeting’ up with them—whatever they call that nowadays—*hooking* up! Anyway, the piano player in our little group lived in his parents’ home in Brentwood, and I think we went over there and swam in his pool and, um, did a little more with those girls. We drove around with those girls a little bit. We ended up hanging out with them and even going to Disneyland at one point. We hung out with them for a few days. We did things together and he seemed to have pretty normal relations with one of those girls.”

By the later part of 1972, the Maitreya band had drifted apart. Altman had moved up to Davis, and Rafael was seeing Craig with less frequency. “I was living in a yoga ashram in South Laguna and he visited me there,” he remembers. “That house is on a cliff overlooking the ocean. He took some LSD that night, and I was thinking, *This is going to be interesting!*” he laughs. “I stayed up all night, a very intense evening. I had this sense of trying to help guide him through the trip actually, to try to keep the energies from going too crazy. So it felt almost like one would feel driving a very big piece of machinery that one wasn’t very familiar with driving—rather stressful and ill-intentioned, but you could kind of do it, you just have to keep really focused the whole time.”

As the acid began to wear off just before sunrise, Rafael saw a completely new side of Craig. “A very interesting thing happened in the early morning hours,” he explains. “There’s a point with LSD, anyway in my experience, that your brain is kind of exhausted from the experience and would prefer maybe to rest, but the LSD’s still kinda working and doesn’t quite let you rest. In that phase of the trip, Maitreya became incredibly lucid and actually started to doubt his strongly held beliefs—er, delusions. That was quite interesting to see this kind of awareness peeking out through the madness. It manifested itself in his professing doubt about *everything*, the things that he’d been so sure about. So that seemed to me like sanity peeking through!” he chuckles. “So I was hoping that would open the door to something more sane.”

Unfortunately this unexpected spell of pure sanity did not last for long. “The next day, as he came back to ‘normal,’ he decided that it would be a good thing to do to fight me to the death with samurai swords,” reveals Rafael, “and I personally didn’t think that was such a hot idea.” “*Death Swords are in order,*” Craig had written on the back cover of *Inca*. “There were no samurai swords present,” shrugs Rafael. “I don’t know where he

was going to obtain them or why. He didn't seem angry with me. It's not like there was any anger involved, it was just some kind of whim of some sort. That was the last time I saw him."

The end of their friendship, though, had nothing to do with fear. "I never saw him do anything at all with violence," stresses Rafael. "He seemed quite a kind and gentle person, really. I can't imagine him doing anything violent. I was beginning my serious studies as a student so I was moving in a different direction at that point. I never made any attempt to contact him again, and I hadn't been that easy to contact either, so I don't know how he would have found me even if he wanted to. I lived at that ashram briefly and that's the last place he knew where he could find me. I ended up living in campus housing. I really don't have any clue of what happened to him after that."

Rafael feels nothing but good will toward the strange friend he once knew as Maitreya. "Let me know if you're able to locate him," he tells me at the end of our phone interview. "I wouldn't mind paying him a visit some day, buying him some food. It'd be nice to help him out."

Chip Douglas had begun his career as a member of the Modern Folk Quartet before joining the Gene Clark Group in 1966 and then the Turtles. In 1967 he became the Monkees' producer, working with them on the *Headquarters* and *Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn and Jones* albums. It was through the Monkees connection that he first met Craig Smith.

"He would come around the shooting set in the studio where we were recording," recalls Chip, "and I ran into him at Screen Gems. He had a song called 'Salesman' that he wrote, and it was on the *Pisces* album. So I just saw him a couple of times. I just remember that big huge wonderful smile of his. He had a lot of white teeth and was a just a clean-cut American guy."

So when Chip next ran across Craig, in early 1973, he was astonished at the transformation that had taken place. "I had just moved back to Los Angeles after living in Hawaii for about three years," he remembers. "I was with my friend Henry Diltz at a music store in Los Angeles on Ventura Boulevard. I think Henry was looking to buy a harmonica—something like that—or banjo strings. We were reviving our Modern Folk Quartet group at around that time so we were hanging out. I lived across the street from

Henry in Laurel Canyon. Anyway, here we are in this store and then this guy walks in the door with real long hair and a spider tattooed right in the middle of his forehead, like right over the third eye. A little like Charles Manson had a swastika there. It was a small tattoo of a small spider. It seemed like it was about half an inch or three-quarters of an inch in diameter, or something like that. I was kind of taken aback. I didn't know who he was. I can't remember which one of us he addressed first, but I think it might have been me. He said, 'Hey, man, I think you might remember me. I was Craig Smith, but now my name is Maitreya.' I was like, *Oh my God. What's happened to this guy?*"

Craig had apparently stopped by the store to sell copies of his album. "He showed us the cover and it was him in the sunset, kind of in a meditational trance of some sort," remembers Chip. "I didn't buy the album. I suppose I should have bought one just for the heck of it. Anyway, then he turned to Henry. Henry was talking, and he's quite a bubbly kind of guy, and Craig turned to him and said, 'Wow, man, you're really putting off a lot of sunshine, man! '

"He was just kind of kooky and spaced out," Chip continues. "I didn't say much. He was just kind of intense. He had an intense expression on his face and he was hustling that album and pounding the pavement and just happened to stop in the store." (Henry Diltz, who had photographed Chris & Craig in 1967, has no recollection of this episode, but concedes he probably just forgot about it.)

It's not clear when Craig got the tattoo of the spider on his forehead. The design is pictured on the *Apache* album cover, and, as mentioned earlier, he can be heard discussing the idea for the tattoo on *Inca*. But this encounter with Chip Douglas and Henry Diltz in 1973 is its first confirmed sighting. Lisa Udwin is not positive, but she thinks Craig may have had the tattoo when she spent time with him the previous year. Jason Laskay remembers seeing it too, but he can't remember when. "Craig had all kinds of shit on his face," he recalls. "He would change up stuff—you know, the Indian markings and stuff. But I think he did get a tattoo."

After this sighting of Craig, the trail goes cold for several years. For a four-year period—from early 1973 until 1977—I could find no one who either saw or heard from him. The most likely explanations were that he was homeless (but presumably somewhere outside the Los Angeles area

where he wouldn't be recognized), institutionalized or incarcerated. Public records searches—complicated as usual by an overabundance of Smiths—didn't yield any useful information. I was ten years into my search before I stumbled upon the reason for this yawning gap in my precariously constructed timeline.

Every time I found a new piece of the puzzle, the picture changed. I had learned early on not to make assumptions as I tried to place each new fact, memory or piece of documentation into its correct sequence. Patterns would take shape only to shift as new pieces were slotted into position. If two pieces appeared to fit together it did not necessarily mean they had a cause-and-effect relationship. It was more complicated than that. Causes and effects were scattered all over the picture and it was not always clear how they related to each other, especially when so many pieces of the puzzle were still missing. Some, I ultimately came to realize, would never be discovered. They were either lost, forgotten, discarded or locked away as family secrets.

Time was not on my side. As the trail grew colder, I found myself chasing down the same blind alleys, and knocking on the same locked doors. But my determination to solve the mystery drove me on, rewarding me periodically with a few new scraps of information and fragments of the story—a conversation, a faded photograph, a couple of lines in an old newspaper, an unreleased song on a dusty acetate. Every scrap offered the possibility of a larger discovery, perhaps even a great revelation.

So I kept on searching, only to stumble across something I had long feared but didn't want to find. Pulled under by this unexpected riptide, my swim through the darkness was about to go deeper and darker.

22

LOVE AND PAIN ARE ONE AND THE SAME

It was Sunday, April 22nd, 1973. Three days before Craig Smith's 28th birthday. It had been four and a half years since he'd been attacked and brutalized in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Seven and a half years since he'd first met Chris Ducey and successfully auditioned for *The Happeners*. Almost ten years since he'd joined the Good Time Singers and the cast of *The Andy Williams Show*.

All of that lay behind him. The friends he'd known, the girls he'd loved, the musicians he'd played with, the singers who'd recorded his songs—all of them were gone from his life. They had fallen out of touch or wanted nothing to do with him. He was a pariah. A leper messiah. No friends, no prospects, and no obvious way forward.

"Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree" was the number one record in the country that week. Richard Nixon was President, but the Watergate net was closing in on him. White House counsel John Dean had just named three of Nixon's closest confidantes as co-conspirators, including his chief of staff H.R. Haldeman. On April 22nd Nixon called Haldeman from his vacation home in Key Biscayne, Florida, to discuss his chief of staff's imminent resignation. "You're doing the right thing," Nixon told him. "That's what I used to think when I killed some innocent children in Hanoi."

In Los Angeles, toxic brown smog blanketed the Valley. April 22nd was Easter Sunday. Craig stopped by the family home to visit his mother. His father must have been at the Pump Room. Craig needed something from his mother—money. Songwriting royalties from the trust fund perhaps. They

had a few drinks. They may have talked about his father's recent appearance on television. The episode of *This Is Your Life* with Peggy Lee had aired the previous month on March 11th.

Suddenly the suburban calm of Woodbridge Street was interrupted by the sounds of loud screaming and glass breaking. Neighbors rushed outside to see what was happening. Through the kitchen window of the Smith residence they saw a young man throwing objects around the room. Someone called the police.

Police officers arrived on the scene soon afterwards and discovered 57-year-old Carole Smith lying on the kitchen floor in a pool of blood. Craig had fled the scene. The house had been ransacked, furniture was overturned, the floors were strewn with papers and broken glass. According to one report "all the glass in the dwelling had been broken." When an officer attempted to question Mrs. Smith, she was only able to mumble a few words: "My son did it. Call my husband." She later testified that she recalled Craig striking her with his hand before she lost consciousness.

She was transported to Riverside Hospital in North Hollywood where she remained for several days. Doctors reported that she suffered "multiple contusions and lacerations to the face and severe lacerations about the eyebrows, and possible contusion and fracture of facial bones and of the nose, cheekbone and eye socket. Numerous sutures were required to close lacerations over the eyes."

While at the hospital police officers received a distraught call from Craig. "How is my mother? Is she going to be all right?" According to police he went on to say, "I was over there for Easter and we were drinking and I told her I wanted my money now, and she wouldn't give it to me, so I beat her up. I thought I killed her—that's why I called. I really didn't mean to hurt her that bad.

"Things just got out of hand—you know how it is," he added before hanging up the phone and fleeing the city.

A felony warrant was issued, and four days later Smith was arrested near Salinas in Monterey County. Two detectives from the North Hollywood Division flew up to Salinas where they picked him up and returned him to Los Angeles for arraignment. I spoke to one of those officers, Detective Addison Sorenson, in September 2014.

Now 78 years old, Sorensen retired from the LAPD in 1985. He doesn't remember going to Salinas to collect a 28-year-old prisoner with a black widow spider tattooed on his forehead. But we talk for a while and he lays out how it would've gone down.

"When I was working the detective bureau I'd go all over the country picking up people that we had warrants for," he tells me, "because what would happen was they'd get arrested somewhere else, and then they'd notify us that they had them in custody, and I'd get the authorization to fly up and get 'em back. I was doing that all the time. I'd always get to pick one guy to go with me, another detective. You'd pick the best ones to go with you because some of those people you'd go out there for were pretty seriously dangerous people."

Detectives Addison Sorensen and Bill Terry would've taken a commercial flight out of LAX to get to Salinas, a task that required the correct paperwork. "They'd give me traveling instructions," Sorensen continues, "because if you go on an airplane with a gun on you, you've gotta have those orders or you can't get on that plane. In other words they're saying that I'm an officer of the law and I'm going to pick up somebody. So I'm the first person to get on that plane at LAX. And then after that they let the crippled people on, then the Class A and then the back-seaters. When I get on that plane I get to meet the captain, the co-captain, every stewardess on that job—they'll all know where me and my partner want to sit. It's important for them to know that. That's the way that works. Then, when we land on the ground there's always a deputy sheriff waiting for us. Some of them had to drive 50 miles to get us; there were different situations like that. So he would take us back to his station where the person was in prison, locked up."

Sorensen would then go into the cell and have a conversation with the prisoner. The tone of the conversation would vary depending on how dangerous he considered the suspect. As Craig was accused of a violent crime, he would've laid down the law pretty strongly to him. "There's one thing you do when you pick up a guy who might be dangerous," says Sorensen. "You go in the cell with him by yourself, nobody else around, and you tell him, 'Try any shit with me, I'll blow your fuckin' brains out. I've got a felony warrant to get you back and if you try to escape I could shoot you.' I mean, you *don't* shoot them, but you put a little fear in them

and then they mind themselves. I'd tell them, 'When you walk, I'll tell you where to walk.' You gotta do that, 'cause some of them people are nuts! I'm a pretty big guy—I'm six foot two and back then I weighed 235. I worked out every other day in the gym at the station. I was solid muscle and strong. You've gotta be that way on that job. They take one look at me and they know that they're gonna do what I'm gonna tell 'em. I never have had any problem taking any of them back, and I've hauled a lot of them back over the years.

"So I would tell him my little story and let him know, 'Try anything foolish and you'll regret it.' You gotta say stuff like that, which may sound mean and cruel, but at the same time you're going for a felon, because we didn't chase after misdemeanors. So then I'd tell the guy, 'We're gonna pick you up tomorrow and we're gonna be on the plane taking you back to Los Angeles.' And then me and my partner would have to get a motel or some place and spend the night. The next morning we'd have our breakfast, go over and pick him up. The sheriff would drive us back to that airport and see that we got on that plane. They were very good about that. We'd do the same thing with people that we'd get; people that would come from different parts of the country to pick up *our* prisoners."

The next morning Craig would have been handcuffed and driven to the airport. "He'd be handcuffed with his hands behind his back," explains the retired cop. "We'd put the handcuffs on them in the front before we went on the plane, but we'd put their sweater or coat over that so people wouldn't see the handcuffs. Then we'd put the person down in the seat. My partner would sit on one side and I would sit on the other. I always sat on that left side, the aisle side, and my partner always would sit on the right side. Then we had a way of using that seatbelt; we'd have the belt through his arms too and then around the back. He's not going nowhere!"

Back in Los Angeles, on Tuesday, May 1st, Craig Vincent Smith—"also known as Kali Maitreya"—was arraigned before Municipal Judge Edward Davenport. He was facing two felony counts: assault with a deadly weapon with intent to commit murder, and assault by means of force likely to produce great bodily injury. The judge scheduled a preliminary hearing for the following week in Municipal Court in San Fernando. Bail was set at $10,000. It was not paid and Smith remained in custody in the Los Angeles

County Jail. He was referred to the Superior Court's psychiatric department to see if he was competent to stand trial.

Arraign Man in Beating

By HARRY HUMPHREYS

Craig Vincent Smith 28, also known as Kali Maitreya, of 13019 Woodbridge St., Studio City, has been held to answer a charge of assault with a deadly weapon "causing great bodily injury."

The defendent, who allegedly went berserk and beat his mother severely enough so that she required facial surgery, had a charge of assault with intent to commit murder dismissed following a preliminary hearing last week.

Municipal Judge Harold Sinclair ruled that the "intent" necessary to bind Smith over to Superior Court on the latter charge had not been established.

The defendant will be arraigned in Van Nuys Dept R on Tuesday, May 29, at 8:30 a.m. Bail was set at $10,000.

The beating of Mrs. Carole Smith 57, reportedly occurred on Sunday. April 22 at the family residence.

There was no testimony at the hearing as to what brought on the assault.

The defendant reportedly had been student body president at one time of Ulysses S. Grant High School. He said that he was a song writer following his arrest in late April in Monterey County.

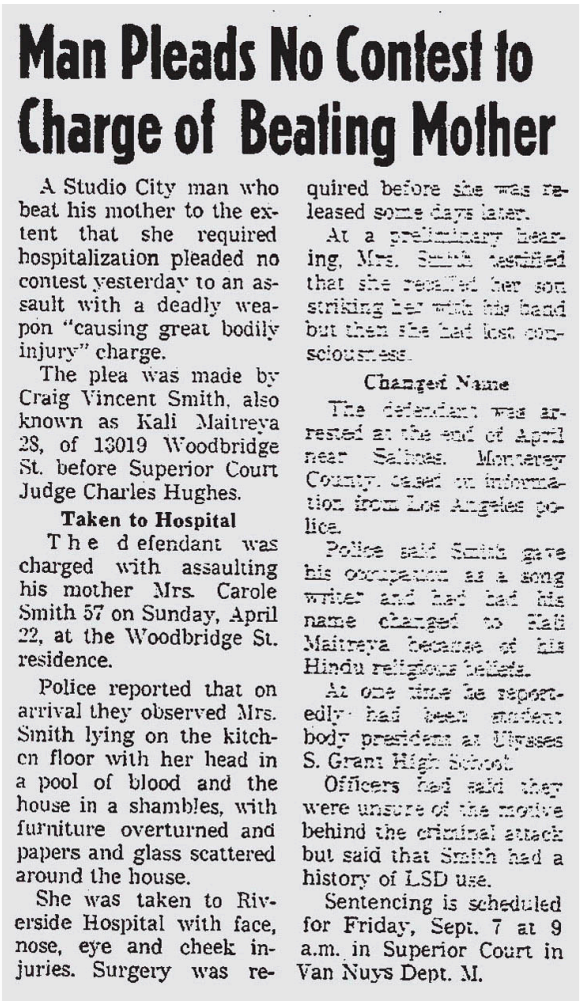
Prior to the hearing, Smith had been referred to the Superior Court's psychiatric department to determine if he were competent to stand trial.

Van Nuys News, May 20, 1973.

"Police said that Smith, who gave his occupation as being song writer, had had his name changed to 'Kali Maitreya' because of his Hindu religious beliefs," reported the *Van Nuys News*. "Officers said they were unsure of a motive behind Smith's alleged criminal behavior." Later news reports noted that Smith had been student body president at Ulysses S. Grant High School and "had a history of LSD use."

In the weeks following the assault, Hal Kant had become involved, presumably at Craig's request, although a public defender may also have been appointed. Evidently this caused some problems behind the scenes. A handwritten notation on one of the court documents, dated May 10th, noted that Kant had been relieved at the request of the defendant, adding: "P.D. [presumably public defender] declared a conflict!!!" The three exclamation points suggest this conflict may have been of some magnitude. The cause of the conflict between the public defender and Hal Kant is not known, but another potential conflict of interest would also have come into play: Craig's brother Chuck worked as an investigator for the public defender's office in Van Nuys.

At a May 15th hearing in Municipal Court, Judge Harold Sinclair ruled that the 'intent' necessary to bind Smith over to Superior Court on the more serious "assault with intent to commit murder" charge had not been established. However, the charge was not amended or dropped, and the case moved forward.



Man Pleads No Contest to Charge of Beating Mother

A Studio City man who beat his mother to the extent that she required hospitalization pleaded no contest yesterday to an assault with a deadly weapon "causing great bodily injury" charge.

The plea was made by Craig Vincent Smith, also known as Kali Maitreya 28, of 13019 Woodbridge St. before Superior Court Judge Charles Hughes.

Taken to Hospital

The defendant was charged with assaulting his mother Mrs. Carole Smith 57 on Sunday, April 22, at the Woodbridge St. residence.

Police reported that on arrival they observed Mrs. Smith lying on the kitchen floor with her head in a pool of blood and the house in a shambles, with furniture overturned and papers and glass scattered around the house.

She was taken to Riverside Hospital with face, nose, eye and cheek injuries. Surgery was required before she was released some days later.

At a preliminary hearing, Mrs. Smith testified that she recalled her son striking her with his hand but then she had lost consciousness.

Changed Name

The defendant was arrested at the end of April near Salinas, Monterey County, based on information from Los Angeles police.

Police said Smith gave his occupation as a song writer and had had his name changed to Kali Maitreya because of his Hindu religious beliefs.

At one time he reportedly had been student body president at Ulysses S. Grant High School.

Officers had said they were unsure of the motive behind the criminal attack but said that Smith had a history of LSD use.

Sentencing is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 7 at 9 a.m. in Superior Court in Van Nuys Dept. M.

Van Nuys News, August 16, 1973.

Bail remained set at $10,000 and another hearing was scheduled for Tuesday, May 29th, in Van Nuys. Smith appeared in court under the name Craig Vincent Kalimaitreya. A private attorney, David F. Grossmann, had now taken over as his defense counsel. His motion for a reduction of bail was denied, and another hearing was scheduled for the following week. On June 5th the defendant—who now gave his "true name" as Craig Vincent Smith—entered a plea of not guilty on both counts, and was scheduled to stand trial in Van Nuys Superior Court, Department M, on Wednesday, July 11th. A motion to release Smith on his own recognizance was denied, as was another attempt to have his bail reduced. Back to County Jail he went.

With the case now scheduled to go to trial, Deputy District Attorney Sterling E. Norris was assigned as prosecutor. At the July 11th hearing Judge Charles Hughes delayed the trial until August 15th, and the court

appointed a psychiatrist, Dr. Albert J. Boner of Beverly Hills, to examine Craig and determine his mental condition. Boner consulted with Smith on July 26th, and was paid $75 by the court for his services. He was succeeded by another psychiatrist, Dr. Seymour W. Applebaum, of Pasadena, who was engaged by the defense.

Applebaum, 43, was an interesting character. He had established the Applebaum Psychiatric Medical Group in 1969, and staked out a position for himself as an expert on youth drug culture. Another of his interests was the religious and spiritual elements of psychotherapy. He must have found Craig to be a particularly compelling case. Perhaps he even bought into Craig's Maitreya trip a little: "Patients in therapy demonstrate authentic mystical and transcendent experiences whether or not defined by themselves or others as traditionally religious," he wrote in a paper published in 1985.

With Applebaum's help, Smith's attorney, Grossmann, was laying the groundwork for a change of plea to not guilty by reason insanity. Eventually though, they elected to employ a different strategy. At the August 15th hearing, Craig waived his right to a jury trial, withdrew his not guilty plea, and entered a new plea of no contest to the lesser charge of assault by means of force likely to produce great bodily injury (the *Van Nuys News* erroneously reported that it was "assault with a deadly weapon"). Sentencing was scheduled for September 7th. In the meantime, it was ordered that Dr. Applebaum or any member of his staff be allowed two additional visits to the County Jail "for the purpose of making a psychiatric examination of the defendant." A few days later another court order was filed amending this to a total of four visits. Grossmann was now gambling on Applebaum's psychiatric expertise to secure a lighter sentence for his client, ideally commitment to some kind of private psychiatric facility outside of the penal system.

A motion was filed in court on September 7th, and Judge Hughes made another ruling: "Defendant is ordered to be delivered to USC County Medical Center for a complete medical and Neurological examination looking for organic damage with metabolic and endocrine factors involved that cause violent behavior." In other words: how serious was Craig's mental condition and did it contribute to the sudden, violent attack on his mother? Three weeks later Craig had not yet been transported to the

hospital so Judge Hughes repeated his ruling with the additional qualifier that "The Sheriff is ordered to notify the court of compliance of this order." Motions from the defense delayed sentencing on three subsequent occasions during October.

Craig had spent more than two hundred days in custody before he finally appeared in Superior Court for sentencing on November 14th, 1973. According to a report in the *Van Nuys News*, at the sentencing hearing "the focal point for discussion was how and where the defendant, who had been a successful professional musician, could best obtain psychiatric care."

Craig was represented in court by Daniel Kallen, who was standing in for David Grossmann that day, as he had on several other occasions. When I reached Kallen in 2014 he had no recollection of the case.

"At the sentencing last week," the *Van Nuys News* reported, "a private attorney representing Smith, and Dr. S.W. Applebaum, a Pasadena psychiatrist who had been privately retained, urged that the defendant be treated for what they said was his 'schizophrenic reaction, paranoid type' mental illness at Altadena Manor. The attorney and psychiatrist indicated to Judge Hughes that the facility near Pasadena was 'locked' and had 10-foot-high walls."

Although he had been retained by the defense, Applebaum's testimony did not weigh too heavily in Craig's favor—especially as reported by the newspaper: "Dr. Applebaum testified that he did not consider Smith to be a dangerous person 'under normal circumstances,' although he still harbored 'ambivalent feelings towards his parents,' which could, conceivably, result in an outburst of violence if Smith is not given proper treatments."

Applebaum went on to add that "Alcohol and street drugs contributed to his violent outbursts."

However, when it came time for the sentencing, Judge Hughes did not see Smith's drug use as a mitigating factor. The defense's arguments, and Applebaum's "expert" testimony, didn't appear to have impressed him in the slightest. There were no assurances under present law that the defendant could be kept locked up in private treatment facility such as the one suggested by the defense, he told the court. "He'd have a right to get out," he explained, "and I can't put him back on the street. He's had a tremendous use of drugs." He cited a report from the Probation Department stating that Smith had taken LSD more than 80 times.

The judge proceeded to hand down the harshest sentence possible, sending Craig to state prison at the California Medical Facility in Vacaville for the term prescribed by law. California's severe open-ended sentencing laws at the time defined that sentence as six months to life. The judge further stated that he would have preferred to have had Smith committed to Atascadero State Hospital, a maximum-security facility, but because of a recent amendment in California's mental health statute "that alternative has been taken away." He recommended that Smith receive intensive medical and psychiatric treatment by the doctors at Vacaville.

"Valley Man Sentenced for Severe Beating of Mother" ran the November 25th headline in the *Van Nuys News*. Craig's brother Chuck had been in court for the sentencing, and he was quoted at the conclusion of the article, listing some of his brother's accomplishments. "The defendant had been senior class president in 1962 at Ulysses S. Grant High School, 'and had been captain of the school's gymnastics team and took second place in the all-city competition on the rings,' according to Charles 'Chuck' Smith, 33, an investigator for the Public Defender's office in Van Nuys and the defendant's brother.

"Although the defendant had 26 scholarship offers, Charles Smith said, he decided to sing on the Andy Williams show for three years following graduation from high school then went into other musical endeavors."

The article concluded on a cautionary note: "The defendant's mental deterioration started 'when he began taking dope and LSD in the mid-1960s,' the brother commented."

Craig Smith's indeterminate sentence of six months to life was made possible by a provision in the California Penal Code, Section 1168, which allowed the court not to fix a precise term or duration of the period of imprisonment. Convicted offenders instead would be sentenced to a broad term, and then their case would be reviewed periodically by a parole board until it was determined they were sufficiently rehabilitated to be released back into the community. Therefore the date of Craig's release, or indeed whether he would *ever* be released, would be decided by the court at some unspecified date in the future based on diagnostic information provided by the medical staff at the prison.

From the point of view of the prosecution, Penal Code 1168 provided a useful tool to keep criminals off the streets for as long as possible,

particularly if there was a drug or mental health component to the case, as the Deputy District Attorney on Craig's case explained to me when I spoke to him in 2014. Sterling E. Norris has no specific recollection of Craig Smith's case. He prosecuted over a thousand trials over the course of his 32-year career with the District Attorney's office, and, as he points out, this particular case never went before a jury; it was what they called "a calendar matter," one of thousands of cases every year that were plea-bargained out, dismissed or otherwise settled without a full-blown trial. Norris kindly offered to read over all the court documents and other relevant paperwork I'd obtained, and give me his perspective on the case.

Sunday, November 23, 19?3—Van Nuys (Calif.) THE NEWS

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Valley Man Sentenced for Severe Beating of Mother

A 28-year-old Studio City man, who allegedly went berserk on April 22 and beat his mother so severely that she required facial surgery, has been sentenced to state prison for a six month to life term.

That sentence was imposed on Craig Vincent Smith, also known as Kali Maitreya, of 13019 Woodbridge St., by Superior Court Judge Charles Hughes following a sentencing hearing last week during which the focal point for discussion was how and where the defendant, who had been a successful professional musician, could best obtain psychiatric care.

Smith had pleaded no contest to a charge of assault with a deadly weapon "causing great bodily injury" against Mrs. Carole Smith 57, at the family home on Sunday, April 22.

Received Call

Mrs. Smith suffered serious facial fractures, a broken nose and a concussion, and she was taken to Riverside Hospital.

While there, police received a phone call from the defendant inquiring as to his mother's condition, and reportedly added, "I really didn't mean to hurt her that bad. Things just got out of hand."

Smith was arrested in Monterey County about a week later.

There was no testimony at a preliminary hearing or in court as to what brought about the assault.

10-Foot Walls

At the sentencing last week, a private attorney representing Smith and Dr. S. W. Applebaum, a Pasadena psychiatrist who had been privately retained, urged that the defendant be treated for what they said was his "schizophrenic reaction, paranoid type" mental illness at Altadena Manor.

The attorney and psychiatrist indicated to Judge Hughes that the facility near Pasadena was "locked" and had 10-foot high walls.

Dr. Applebaum testified that he did not consider Smith to be a dangerous person "under normal circumstances," although he still harbored "ambivalent feelings towards his parents," which could, conceivably, result in an outburst of violence if Smith is not given proper treatments.

"Alcohol and street drugs contributed to his violent outbursts," the psychiatrist added.

No Assurance

However, in sending Smith to state prison, with a recommendation that he receive intensive medical and psychiatric treatment by doctors at the Vacaville, Cal. facility, Judge Hughes took note of a Probation Dept. report stating Smith had had more than 80 LSD "trips."

The Judge also said that under present law there could be no assurance that the defendant could be kept locked up at a private treatment facility such as the one suggested in Pasadena.

"He'd have a right to get out, and I can't put him back on the street," the Judge stated, "he's had a tremendous use of drugs."

Judge Hughes stated he would have liked to have the defendant committed to the state facility at Atascadero, but that under a recent amendment to the state's basic mental health statute "that alternative has been taken away."

Sang on Show

The defendant had been senior class president in 1962 at Ulysses S. Grant High School. "and he had been captain of the school's gymnastics team and took second place in all-city competition on the rings," according to Charles "Chuck" Smith 33, an investigator for the Public Defender's office in Van Nuys and the defendant's brother.

Although the defendant had 28 scholarship offers, Charles Smith said, he decided to sing on the Andy Williams show for three years following graduation from high school. then went into other musical endeavors.

The defendant's mental deterioration started "when he began taking dope and LSD in the mid-1960s," the brother commented.

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"This was one of the Vacaville crowd," he tells me after looking over the case documents. "Around this time, the early '70s, there were a lot of cases that involved drugs and many times we would try to get those sent to Vacaville. From our aspect the time in custody sometimes would be greater than if they put them in the [regular, non-medical] prison, because at that

time second-degree murder was only five years in prison. That was kind of the whole true story of all these things. Basically we had the Vacaville strategy to see if we could keep these guys in prison as long as possible, 'cause they'd be right out, and usually what would happen would be they'd get right out and overdose."

From the beginning, then, they had Smith's case earmarked as a drug case, and one where "the Vacaville strategy" would work, especially given Craig's mental health issues, and the defense's decision to use that as grounds for a lesser sentence. "He was a substantial drug user," observes Norris, "but he was not uncommon. It hit in the '70s there just terrible. Obviously he'd had quite a downward spiral too, after being kind of a leader in high school and a good athlete and everything else. But it's a very common scenario. I hate to tell you, but I had literally hundreds of mothers and wives crying on my shoulder and telling me, 'I'd rather have him dead than have him back on this heroin and LSD.' Of course the '70s were really the worst time for all that. I tell you what really helped, though, was the stronger laws that came in later. It helped from our standpoint, from the criminal justice aspect. I think they started to get the idea that this stuff is dangerous. If you go out and do this stuff, you're not Superman, this stuff affects you all. It'll take you right down to the bottom of the world. That was a terrible time. A lot of them still haven't learned today, but I still think it's a lot better than the '70s. It became so popular then, it was the thing to do."

Norris was not impressed with the defense's expert witness, Dr. Seymour Applebaum. "We had the psychiatrists and doctors that we had worked with and had faith in," he explains. "Then there were the people that were out to sell themselves to some defense attorney. Seymour Applebaum—I remember him. It's vague, it's been so long, but what comes out right away was he's *not* one we'd depend on. We had our psychiatrists that we had faith in, that when they said 'the guy has mental problems' we would be assured that that's what it was and that that has to be factored in, but Applebaum I remember was kind of a bizarre guy—I may be wrong, it's been so long, but I kind of got a recollection that he was not one that we'd rely on."

Norris was correct about Applebaum not being the most reputable of expert witnesses. Only a year earlier, he'd been arraigned on charges of

grand theft after allegedly submitting more than $4,000 in insurance claims to Medi-Cal for services which were not performed. The charges were later dismissed due to insufficient evidence, but the taint of dishonesty remained.

The defense's strategy of wanting their client committed to a private medical facility was a common one at the time. "See, there were people like Applebaum that either had a facility or they had some interest in a facility, and they wanted the defendant to go to that particular facility. It was usually local, somewhere in the general Los Angeles area as opposed to some mental institution upstate or something. There'd be a little battle about whether he's going to go to that facility. Sometimes [the defendant] would have money or the family would have money and they'd get the attorney, and then the attorney would get a psychiatrist coming out of a mental facility in the general L.A. area. I remember those. We had a number of them. Generally, from the D.A.'s standpoint, we'd be opposed to it, mainly out of custody. What we'd be fearful of is that he would go there and all of a sudden the guy would do something berserk and that would probably come back to haunt *us* in terms of agreeing to this physician. Generally we had a strong policy not to do that—and especially not to do it with somebody that we thought was seriously mentally ill. I mean at Vacaville and some of the other state facilities at least they had the custody and the medical staff to really take care of them—or at least take care of them better than some small facility that was being used by a lawyer or maybe a psychiatrist, too, to put patients there. We'd always have that battle, in some fashion."

As Norris sees it, the California Medical Facility at Vacaville was the best possible place for Craig at the time. "He committed a serious crime," he explains, "but under the law in the '70s he wasn't going to get much time. It'd be better to keep him out there [at Vacaville] where they'd try to work with him. Mainly they kept them in prison long enough out there that for some of them—not *all* of them, but *some* of them—it did some good. There was a belief that some of these psychiatric treatments and so forth would help. From our standpoint it was just one way of increasing the incarceration time to protect the public, and also for the individual, for him to recover.

"That's about all I can say about this case," he concludes. "I don't have any recollection as to this individual guy. I don't remember talking to the

victim. Usually I would talk to the victims, in this case his mother. I don't recall that, but I may have just forgotten; I had thousands of cases."

As for Craig's defense team: David F. Grossmann was disbarred in 1998 after violating trust accounting rules. He'd already previously been placed on probation in 1978 and had his law license suspended, after being convicted on a federal charge of possession of cocaine for sale. He died in 2009. Dr. Seymour Rosenbaum was still practicing psychiatry when he died in 2007 in Kew Gardens, New York. Daniel Kallen, who assisted Grossmann on Craig's case and appeared at the sentencing hearing, runs his own law office on Ventura Boulevard in Encino. He has no recollection whatsoever of the case.

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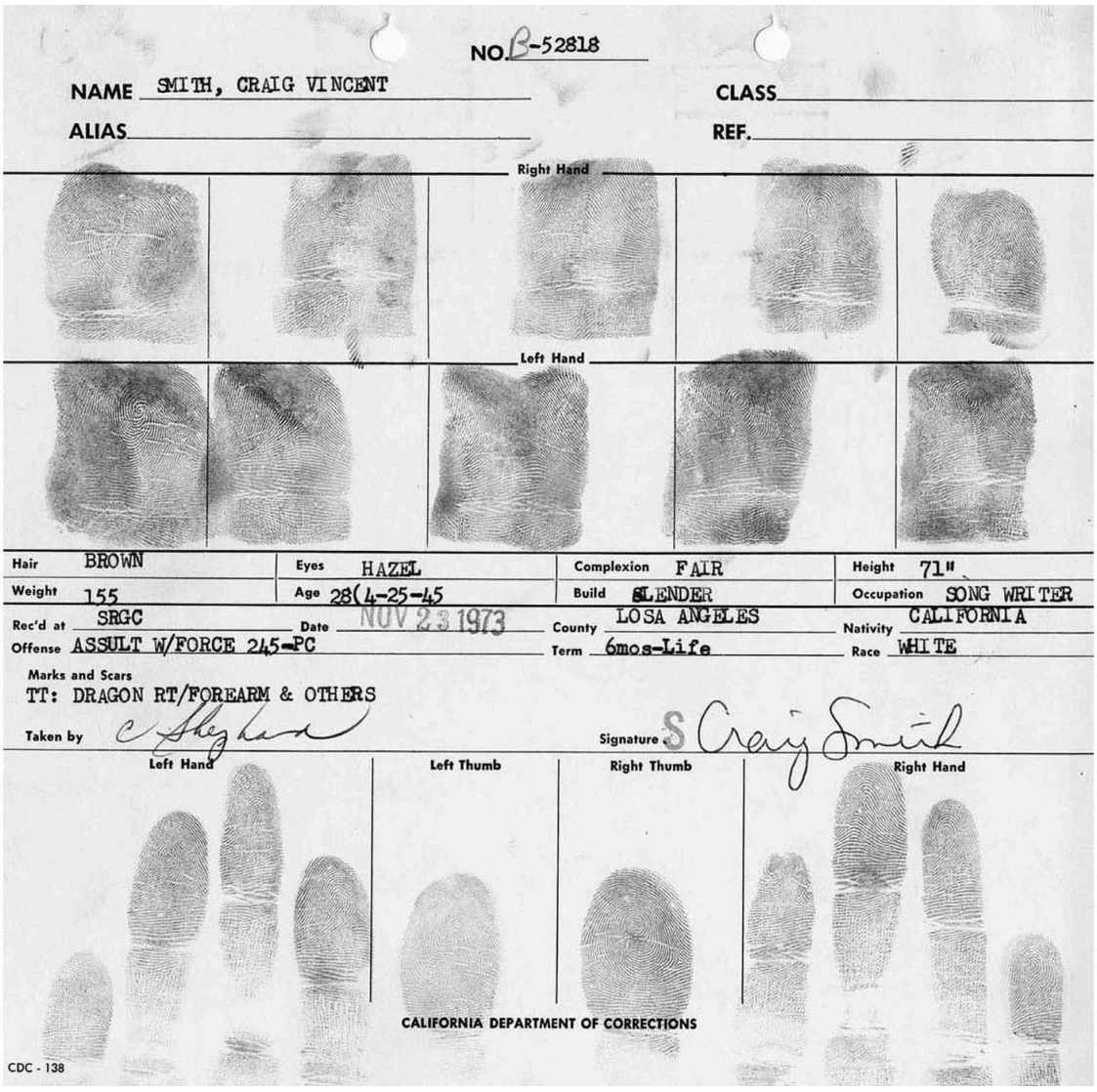
IF TEMPER NEEDS REST

Down a long hall
You may stumble, you may fall
Truth steers this ride

On November 23rd, 1973, Craig was transferred from the County Jail to the California Institute of Men in Chino, San Bernardino County. There he was photographed, fingerprinted and processed into the state prison system. (Term: 6mos-Life, Occupation: Song Writer.) He looks composed in his prison mug shot. One of his front teeth had yellowed with decay. Another feature jumps out right away, though, jarringly so: the black widow spider tattooed on his forehead. I had always been skeptical of its existence, figured that what only a couple of people had reported seeing was only a temporary marking. But after 215 days of incarceration, there it was, exactly as described. It can't have made a favorable impression on the judge. Strangely, Smith's prison ID and fingerprint document makes no specific reference to it. Under "Marks and Scars" they note only a dragon tattooed on his right forearm "& others." This can probably be attributed to sloppy paperwork; in addition to the spider on his face the mug shot clearly shows large dragon tattoos on both arms.

A second mug shot buried deeper in his file shows a different side of Craig Smith. His eyes glisten with fear, his mouth is set in a painful grimace, his lank, greasy hair is plastered behind his ears. He looks frightened, like a caged animal. He looks like someone who needs some serious help.

From Chino Smith was sent to D.V.I. (Deuel Vocational Institute) near Tracy in the San Joaquin Valley. He arrived there on December 6th, 1973. On his Inmate Record Card he gave his occupation as song writer and his religion as Buddhist. D.V.I. is a minimum-security prison often used as a reception center for newly processed prisoners. Here it would be decided whether Smith should serve out the rest of his sentence, however long it might be, at a medical facility like CMF Vacaville, as Judge Hughes had specifically recommended, or elsewhere in the California penal system.


NO. B-52818

NAME SMITH, CRAIG VINCENT

CLASS

ALIAS

REF.

Right Hand

Left Hand

Hair BROWN	Eyes HAZEL	Complexion FAIR	Height 71"
Weight 155	Age 28(4-25-45	Build SLENDER	Occupation SONG WRITER
Rec'd at SRGC	Date NOV 23 1973	County LOSA ANGELES	Nativity CALIFORNIA
Offense ASSULT W/FORCE 245-PC		Term 6mos-Life	Race WHITE

Marks and Scars

TT: DRAGON RT/FOREARM & OTHERS

Taken by C Shepherd

Signature S Craig Smith

Left Hand | Left Thumb | Right Thumb | Right Hand

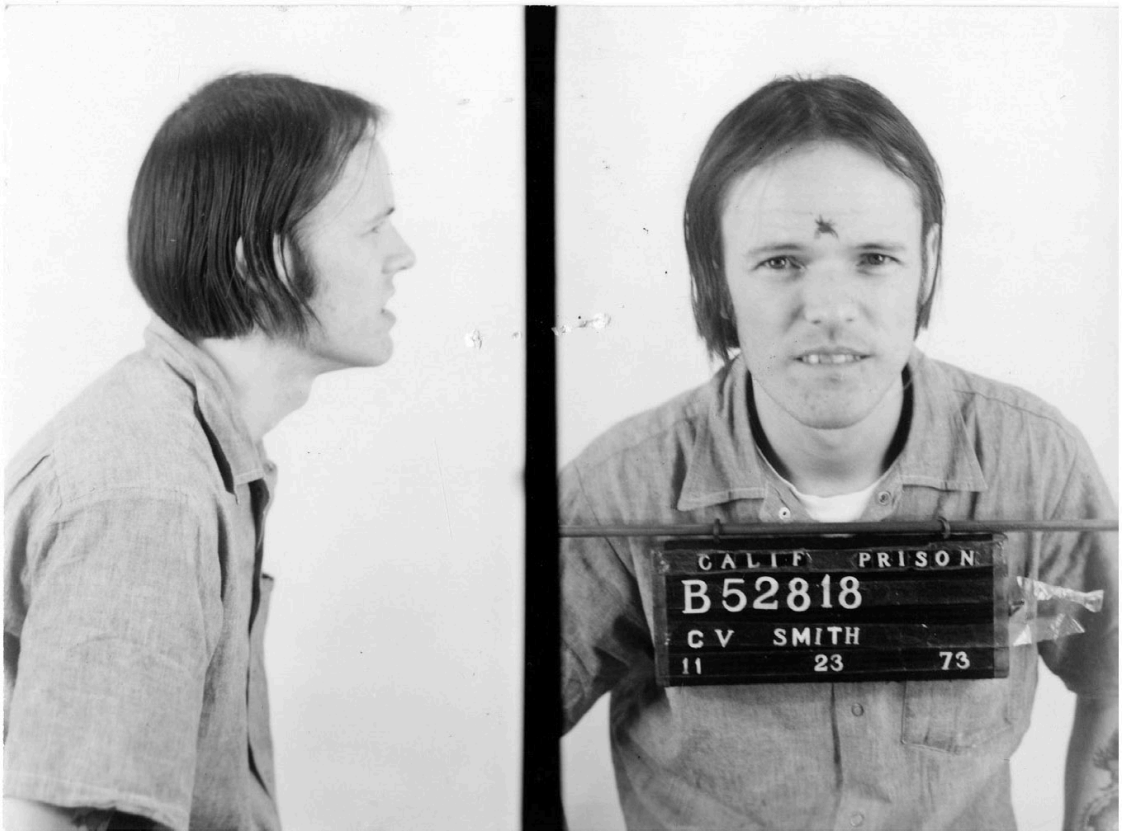
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

CDC - 138

In a statement dated January 15th, 1974, Craig gave his version of the events of April 22nd, 1973, and made his case for a transfer to a regular

prison rather than a medical facility. It's a fascinating glimpse into his state of mind at the time, and helps give at least some clarity to the rather confused series of events laid out in the court documents.

"The case is finally finished," said Craig. "I did it and now I regret my actions. I would not do it again now, this is for sure. I had a temper tantrum, and this is the extent of it. If temper needs rest then I need rest. I will serve my time with dignity and reserve. My attorney thought I would get less time if I pleaded temporary insanity, so I did. I regret doing so now, as it was just a temper flare-up resulting from insults from the victim, plus the victim refused to relinquish $800.00 of my money, which was needed desperately by me, to me. In short, I was pushed to a point where I chose to force rather than back out of a confrontation."



Craig's choice of words is interesting. A "temper tantrum" seems a wholly inadequate way of describing such a vicious assault, but it implies more deeply rooted issues in the mother-child relationship: a spoiled child who didn't get his own way. While he appears to regret his actions, Smith

also places some of the blame on his mother because of her “insults” and refusal to give him the money he needed and felt was rightfully his, most likely his songwriting royalties. Nothing excuses what Smith did that day, but he was clearly dangerously unstable at the time, and was pushed beyond all rationality.

If Craig feared for his sanity, as he had in the past, he was now doing everything in his power to suppress and contain those feelings and appear normal again. His statement ends: “I would rather do time in a state penitentiary than at a state mental institution as I realize my crime and am adjusted quite well to prison as long as I am in a one-man cell. I see no reason why rest cannot be more possible at prison than in a rest home like Vacaville or Altadena.”

Rest. Twice he states that he needs “rest.” The mind of a schizophrenic is in a constant state of alert, receiving and processing information, finding patterns and assigning meanings even to the most meaningless stimuli. Hence the construction of elaborate paranoid delusions—in Smith’s case, his reinvented self as a Messianic superbeing called Maitreya. His months of incarceration had no doubt given him time to reflect on those delusions. Without hallucinogenic drugs magnifying and multiplying them, perhaps he was able to calm the voices in his head and find a measure of clarity. Certainly he’d regained enough clarity to realize that if he was assigned to a psychiatric facility like CMF Vacaville he might be looking at an indefinite term behind bars, possibly a lifetime, especially if the doctors there diagnosed his condition unfavorably. On the other hand, if he was sent to a regular medium-security prison, he’d likely be released after a much shorter period of time. At this point he’d already served over nine months of his minimum six-month sentence. All he’d need to do was lay low, and keep a cool head. All he needed was to rest.

Craig’s statement had the desired effect. After assessment at Tracy’s Reception and Guidance Center he was assigned to the California Men’s Colony (CMC), a state prison located on the central California coast near San Luis Obispo. He arrived there on February 7th, 1974. So much for the Vacaville strategy.

CMC housed its then approximately 3,000 inmates in two separate facilities, East and West. The West facility has minimum-security housing and open dormitories. A few years earlier Timothy Leary had escaped from

there, with the assistance of the Weathermen. The East, on the other hand, is a medium-security facility with individual cells, fenced perimeters, and towers with armed guards. Craig was sent to CMC East, and appears to have spent the duration of his sentence there. His fellow inmates included a couple of Manson Family members, Tex Watson and Bruce Davis. Craig would have spent between nine and eleven hours of each day in a one-man cell, a room of approximately 54 square feet, with a bed bolted to the wall, a toilet, a small desk, some shelves, and a chair. There were no bars on the cell's one small window, which could be opened for ventilation and light. The prison offered a large, well-stocked library, four outside quads where inmates could mingle and exercise, and a variety of academic and vocational classes. There was also a hospital unit to provide medical and psychiatric care.

Presumably Craig received some kind of psychiatric treatment while incarcerated. However, it's impossible to know for sure because the medical and disciplinary files of California inmates remain sealed by law for 75 years.

Five weeks after arriving at CMC, Smith had his first parole hearing. Parole was denied and his next hearing was scheduled for one year later. In February 1975, a prisoners' advocacy group called The Burning Truth filed a writ of habeas corpus on Craig's behalf in San Luis Obispo Superior Court. Citing the recent case of *People vs. Thomas* (September 18th, 1974), in which it was ruled that the life term for violation of Section 245 (a) (the same assault charge Smith had been convicted of) was unconstitutional, the petitioner requested that the wording of Smith's sentence be revised to include the words "term prescribed by law, not to exceed ten years" rather than "six months to life." This legal move may have offered Craig some momentary hope, but it had no effect—in part because it was filed in the wrong jurisdiction. Craig had been tried and sentenced in Los Angeles, not San Luis Obispo. The paperwork was filed away in the court's archives to become yet another tiny piece of an unsolvable puzzle.

Smith was denied parole a second time on March 21st, 1975, and faced another 12 months wait before being allowed to reapply. He filed to have that decision reconsidered in August, and was again turned down. His next hearing was on April 22nd, 1976—exactly three years after he had attacked his mother. This time parole was granted, although it would take six more

weeks before the paperwork was finalized. All the usual terms of parole applied: he would have to report regularly to an assigned parole officer, could not leave the State of California without prior written consent, was not allowed to own or use a firearm, could have his home searched at any time without a warrant, and be placed in a community hospital or prison if he was deemed incapable of conducting himself in "an acceptable manner." Three additional conditions were attached to Smith's parole: Firstly, he had to attend a Parole Outpatient Clinic, a program designed to address his mental health issues. Secondly, he must abstain from the use of any alcoholic beverages, and, last, he would undergo regular anti-narcotic testing. These terms of parole would remain in effect until January 12, 1984 (that date was later amended to July 1st, 1978). Craig signed the paperwork agreeing to all of these terms on June 4th.

On June 7th, 1976, Craig Smith was released from prison and returned to Los Angeles County. Where he lived and how he got by is not known. It's not impossible, but it seems highly unlikely that he would've been welcomed back to his family's home in Studio City. More missing puzzle pieces. The record shows that he did not violate any of the conditions of his parole, so on July 1st, 1978 he was officially discharged, and could put that chapter of his life behind him. He was now 33 years old.

One more missing puzzle piece: the spider tattoo. It was gone.

Suzannah Jordan and Peter Banks in the late ‘70s. (Photo courtesy Sidonie Jordan)

24

WALKIN' SOLO

I'm walkin' solo
Just like a song when you sing it all alone.

Suzannah Jordan lost track of Craig in 1968, shortly before he left on his travels. With the Pillory she'd had a recurring role on *Peyton Place*, and recorded half a dozen excellent tracks for A&M Records, all of which remained unreleased. She worked as a staff writer there through the early '70s. Jim Ford recorded her song "Changing Colors" on his *Harlan County* album in 1969 and Crazy Horse cut "Rock and Roll Band" in 1973. As Sidney Jordan she recorded a single on MGM's CoBurt subsidiary, "All God's Mornings," in 1970. She also found work as a backup singer, including a period on the road as one of Ike & Tina Turner's Ikettes. "I was one of the few white Ikettes," she recalls, "but unfortunately I couldn't handle the violence that Ike was handing out to Tina. I couldn't take it. The band would just sit around, but I didn't last for long because I couldn't stand watching her get beat up."

In 1974 Suzannah relocated to the UK where she married Peter Banks, previously the guitarist in Yes and the Syn. Banks' group Flash was in the process of dissolving so together they formed a new progressive rock band, Empire, with Suzannah—now using the name Sydney Foxx—as lead singer and co-songwriter. In 1977 she and Banks were in Los Angeles attempting to land a deal for the band when they ran into Craig.

"We were living at the Tropicana," recounts Suzannah. "We'd just come back from England and we were signing with Zappa's label, Herb Cohen and those guys. We were walking down the street one day and this bum

from the street, with his hair all natty, came walking up and I looked in his face and I said, 'Oh my God! Craig!' He said, 'Yeah?' I said, 'Suzannah!'"

Suzannah was shocked to see her old friend in a state of obvious homelessness, but Craig appeared to be fine mentally, as far as she could tell. No spider tattoo. No mention of Maitreya. "We took him into the hotel room and he was quite coherent," she remembers. "I didn't get to find out what happened. We talked about the old times and the band and Chris. I never felt fearful of him. I never saw any sign of mental illness. I kind of just got the feeling like maybe he took too many acid trips or something and hadn't come back—that kind of thing—which had happened to people in L.A. But he didn't seem dangerous or mentally ill, just homeless, like a street person. He seemed happy enough; he didn't seem distressed or manipulative, like a con man, like some people are. He didn't need alcohol—none of that. We gave him a meal and I said, 'Come back, stop by.' But I never saw him again, just that one day.

"Of course, it's kind of haunted me all these years," says Suzannah, who continues to write and record under the name Sidonie Jordan. "What the hell happened? Because he was the last person you'd feel would have mental problems. He was such a bright spark—so charismatic, so happy! He was a real sweetheart. But high achievers like Craig sometimes end up like that. He was like a golden boy. He had so much promise and he did so well in the early part of his career that later maybe he felt a failure to his family?"

David Jackson, Craig's friend and colleague from the Good Time Singers, also encountered Craig during this period. Jackson, who was still based in Los Angeles, had gone on to enjoy a successful career as a songwriter and a session musician. "I ran into him at the Farmers Market on Vine Street," he remembers. "He came up to me and I didn't recognize him. The smile was gone—which is part of the reason I didn't recognize him, it took me a minute. He told me that he had been traveling and he'd been beaten. He said he was homeless and he was not in good shape, and he said something about being in trouble or causing trouble. I said, 'Is there anything I can do for you?' and I turned around to pay my bill. When I turned back around, he'd disappeared."

Black swan moving through grey curtains of mist Watching the dawn for the rising sun While the world still slumbers

In most civilized countries, the mentally ill are cared for, either through state-funded institutional care or outpatient services. But not in the United States, particularly since the massive defunding of public welfare programs that began in the Reagan era and continues to this day. With no social safety net to help them, and no other recourse, hundreds of thousands of mentally ill people end up living—and dying—on the streets of America.

Craig Smith was just one of them. There were short periods in low-rent apartments, seedy crash pads and fleapit motels, but, as best as I can ascertain, for more than 30 years he was mostly homeless.

Throughout that time, with no home to call his own, Craig stayed close to the home he once knew, wandering the streets of Studio City and North Hollywood—the same streets he walked down and played on as a child.

Patsy Clinger still lived in the area and remembers seeing Craig on several occasions in the late ’70s and early ’80s, either walking along the street or waiting at a bus stop, and looking increasingly unhealthy and disheveled. Around 1981 or ’82, she was having dinner with her family, including sister Debra, at Tiny Naylor’s on the corner of Ventura Boulevard when she spotted Craig. “He was sitting in the little overflow area and I said to my husband, ‘I know that’s Craig Smith. I’m sure of it.’ And I was going to go over and say something, and I thought, *Oh boy. Should I?* I was apprehensive, but all of a sudden we got eye contact. He looked at my eyes, I looked at his. He got up from the table, he walked over and he said, ‘Are you Patsy Clinger?’ And I said, ‘I sure am. How are you, Craig?’”

Craig joined them at their table and they talked for a while. He had gained some weight. His hair had thinned out, but he was still wearing it in the style of the Beatles. He also had a beard. Patsy noticed that he had on the same velvet Nehru jacket he’d worn to her sister Melody’s wedding more than a decade earlier. It was now grubby and frayed. They made small talk. He asked about her family, and, intriguingly, mentioned he’d been doing some recording. “He was coherent,” remembers Patsy. “He was kind, he was respectful. He didn’t ask anything of me. But even though he was

there, he was far off. He had that glazed-over look. But the fact that he recognized me—that had been a lot of years!"

"He was really not himself," remembers Debra Clinger. "He was not the same person that I remember him being. Patsy was the one that recognized him. He was pretty disheveled, pretty bad, very dirty—just sad, really sad."

It was in the early '80s that Jim Roup began to first see him around the neighborhood in Studio City. "I was working at St. Michael and All Angels Church Day School up in Coldwater Canyon," recalls Jim, "and would see Craig occasionally standing by the church during the day. He might've been listening to the kids taking piano lessons inside, or the church organist practicing for the Sunday services. He looked a bit disheveled with a fat belly and a Beatle haircut. I recognized him from walking around Studio City and seeing him on the bus."

The church's Reverend Stevens didn't like the look of Craig and instructed Jim to tell him to move along if he saw him again hanging around the school or the church. But Jim never did have occasion to do that.

Ken Morgan, who you may recall as the kid brother of Craig's childhood friend Jeff, remembers running into Craig in 1985 at the Kirkwood Bowling Alley where Ken was working at the time. The bowling alley was part of Jerry's Famous Deli, a bar and restaurant on Ventura Boulevard, walking distance from the Smith family home. "I didn't recognize him at first," says Ken. "I couldn't tell it was him. He looked like he'd just got hit in the head or something because he had a big lump on his forehead. Then somebody told me, 'It's Craig Smith.' I talked to him and told him who I was. He just said hello. It wasn't a 'long time, no see' thing. We just said hi and stuff like that. I said, 'I can't believe that's you!'"

Craig was now 40 years old, and from his appearance it was obvious that he was homeless. Could the lump on his forehead have had something to do with the removal of the spider tattoo? Craig came into the bowling alley a few more times after that, once with another homeless man from the neighborhood called Bradley White. "Bradley was kind of a bizarre guy," says Ken. "Everybody knew him. He'd sometimes wear women's shoes. He ended up getting murdered. Craig came in with him one time at the same time—I don't know if they were together or not."

Bradley was one of a small tribe of homeless men who sometimes hung together in Studio City at the time. Another was Russ Turner, a prodigiously

talented pianist who'd worked with Frank Sinatra, Smokey Robinson, Martha Reeves and Boz Scaggs, and written arrangements for Buddy Rich and Lainie Kazan before a serious alcohol problem sent his life off the rails. The parking lot of Hughes Market on Ventura and Coldwater Canyon Boulevard, and a vacant lot across the street from there, were gathering spots for Bradley, Russ, and other hard-drinking transients like Johnny Bird and Bucky. The street behind Jerry's Famous Deli and the bowling alley was another. Brian Lally was a bartender at Jerry's in the mid-'80s and sometimes hung out with them after hours, drinking and taking drugs. "Except for Russ, who was dirty and missing a few teeth, they were pretty cleaned up," Lally remembers, "but then they would drink too much and go wild. A couple of the guys had cars and went to the Laundromat. They slept in their cars. Back then you could park on the street behind Jerry's Famous Deli, which was a meeting point for those guys. There was a street back there and you could park all night and nobody would bother you. That's when they had the Queen Mary, which was a transvestite bar, a singing female impersonator place right off of Whitsett. There were a lot of hustlers in the alley back there. It was a strange time in Studio City back then."

Only the walls of Jerry's Famous Deli separated the Studio City outsiders from the Hollywood insiders. "A lot of musicians and famous people were coming in the bar when I was bartending," remembers Brian. "It was a real happening place at the time, from Bob Dylan to Marlon Brando, Jack Nicholson, David Letterman—at that time in the '80s they all came in to eat. John Candy was at the bar, Michael Keaton, Tom Hanks, Jeff Goldblum, Al Jarreau; Bobby Womack was a regular there. Lisa Marie Presley came in when she was 18, and she looked just like her father so I served her. Brian Setzer was sitting there talking to Lisa Marie about rockabilly. She didn't tip me, so when she came back I told her to get out. That was kind of what the bar was like at the time. Bradley was up and down the street back then, and the guy who owned the car wash on Fulton and Ventura would leave the outside light on in the back of the car wash so Bradley could read before he went to sleep. So it was like a small town. It was just a different world not that many years ago. Bradley always had a book with him, and he was always wearing a knee-length denim coat with like lambskin on the inside, and a pair of pumps."

Bradley's father was Robert G. White, a Hollywood screenwriter who'd worked on some of the old Charlie Chan movies. Bradley had buzzed around the fringes of the movie industry like an angry mosquito since the '60s, an outsider persistently trying to find a way inside. Like countless other dreamers, he had a pet project he'd been trying to get made for years. One time at Lally's apartment he got on the phone to Michael Landon's production company and demanded to speak to Landon about his project. When the receptionist wouldn't put him through, Bradley screamed obscenities at her: "Don't you know who I am?" he yelled. "I'm fucking Bradley White and you'll rue the day you crossed me!" Bradley had one simple ambition, which he explained to Brian, and anyone else who'd listen: "I just want to produce my project, and then dance on top of a piano on the *Tonight Show* in a pair of high heels."

Further outside than even this tribe of rank outsiders was Craig Smith. He would have crossed paths with Bradley and the gang on the street, but their interactions were minimal. There was a social hierarchy even among the homeless that marked Craig as an outsider because of his mental condition. Increasingly withdrawn and uncommunicative, he was a pariah even among pariahs. Bradley, Russ, Johnny and the rest were there for the party. They gathered together to drink and take drugs, to pool their limited resources, and to protect each other. Brian Lally regularly spent time with them from 1984 until 1988, but never once did he see Craig in their company. Craig was invariably alone. From the early '80s onwards, there's no evidence that he socialized with anyone at all. He appeared to live inside his own head, in a kind of self-imposed solitary confinement.

Some of the other Studio City transients showed a great deal of resourcefulness when it came to their living situation. Brian Lally still laughs when he tells of some of their exploits. "This wasn't Skid Row, it was Studio City," he explains. "Over on Whitsett Avenue, across from the golf course, there was a string of five or six empty houses. And, again, it was a different time and they didn't put a fence around them the whole time. So the houses were abandoned and so you had all these guys—Bradley and Russ and Bucky and Johnny and there were other homeless guys all over there. They'd broken into the houses, and they're great old Valley homes which have brick built-in barbecues in the back and swimming pools. So these guys are back there living the life of Riley! They

were barbecuing, they were drinking, they had boom boxes going—it was incredible what these guys got into! There are a lot of homeless people that have mental problems, but these guys were just drunks and they would see a situation and they would just capitalize on it. It was crazy and it still makes me laugh that they had this row of houses. There must have been a dozen of them in the pools, drinking, with the barbecue going. Right in the middle of a street of very expensive homes—that was the whole weird thing about it. Finally the cops ran them out, but for a while it was just insane!"

The living wasn't always so easy. Many times they'd set up camp under the Laurel Canyon overpass at the L.A. River. That's where Russ and Johnny were one night in August 1989, along with a few other friends, including 32-year-old Rocco Froio. Some of them had been shooting heroin. According to Turner, who later described the incident in a book he wrote with his mother, *Wings Born Out of Dust*, Froio was already dead from an overdose when Russ arrived on the scene. Rather than call police or paramedics, Johnny and another guy, Paul, dragged Rocco's body up to street level and dumped it in the bushes. The coroner ruled the death to be an accidental overdose, but Rocco's father, Rick Froio, a music industry executive, suspected foul play and set about finding who killed his son. He placed a sign at the place where Rocco's body was found asking for information, and roamed the area asking people if they saw anything. His persistence paid off. Witnesses came forward, and John Bird was charged with murder and the sale and transportation of heroin. Prosecutors accused Bird of shooting up Rocco with a lethal dose of heroin while he slept. Eventually the charge was reduced to involuntary manslaughter and Bird was sentenced to four years in prison.

Johnny Bird later died after being hit by a car on Ventura Boulevard, right in front of Jerry's Famous Deli. "It's a big curve right there," says Brian Lally, "very dangerous for pedestrians. Cars come between 30 and 50 [MPH] around the corner, and they don't see you. John would be drunk and he'd step off the curb and put both his hands out, with his palms up like he was saying 'stop,' and would just walk across that street. Every time, cars would be locking up their brakes. And then one night he did it in the rain, and that was the last time he ever did it."

Bradley White never did get his project made. "When his mother passed away she left him some money," recalls Lally. "I heard he got like twelve

hundred dollars in cash, and then another $200 a month in a trust fund." Bradley took his money, scored some heroin and checked into a hotel along with a pimp and a couple of other lowlifes. Reportedly he had a lot of money on him, and was bragging about it. By the end of the night, Bradley was dead and his money had disappeared—along with everyone else in the hotel room. His death on March 28th, 1988, was ruled a drug overdose, but word on the street was that the real cause was a quick, sharp blow to the head.

In January 1993, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote a story about Russ Turner, who was still homeless and playing piano for tips in a Studio City barbershop—after first "downing two malt liquors to take the edge off his aches." The article quotes jazz singer Lainie Kazan, whom Turner had worked with in the '70s as her musical arranger and conductor. "I love Russ Turner," she said. "I prize him for his spirit and his soul. I still play the music he orchestrated for me years ago because it's the finest work I have in my library. It's broken my heart to have to sit by and watch Russ self-destruct. There are musicians all around the country waiting for Russ Turner to kick his habit and come back to us. We're waiting with open arms." The singer regularly helped out Turner with money, food and clothing, but to no avail. Turner died around 2003 without resuming his career in music. His body was reportedly found in a park frequented by homeless people.

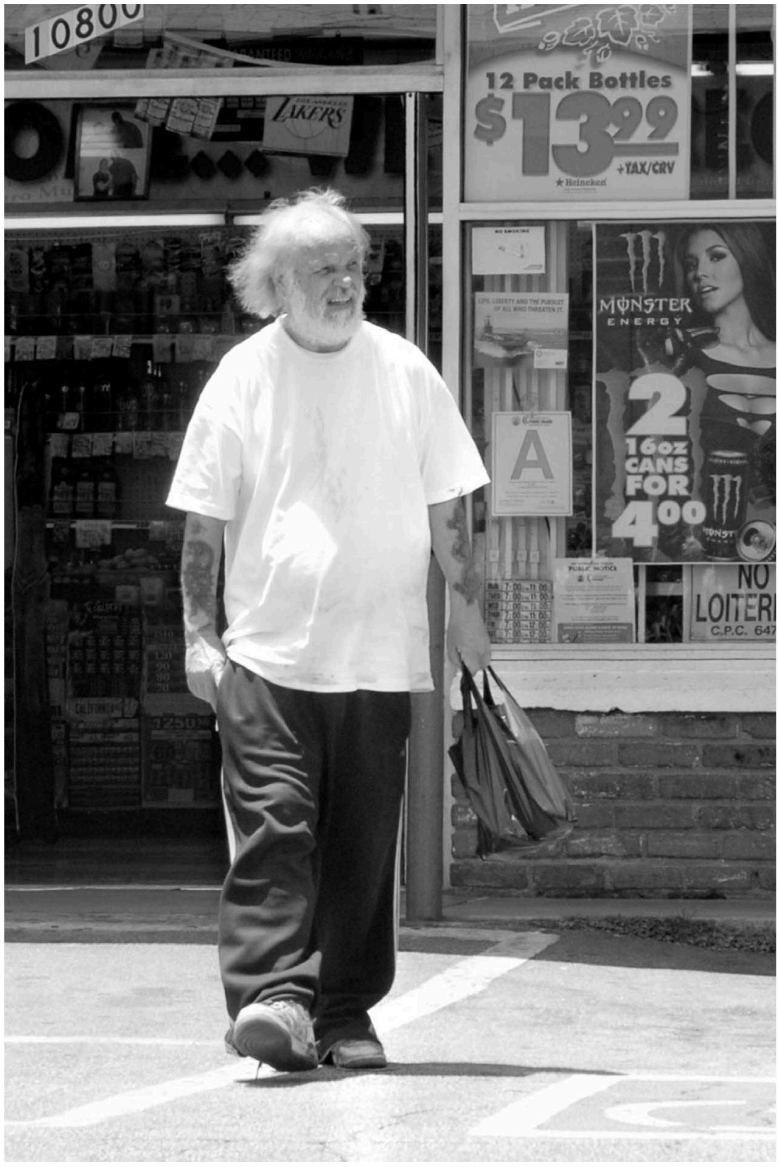
Perhaps Craig Smith heard Russ Turner play as he walked past the barbershop near Laurel Canyon and Magnolia Boulevards. But there was no more music for Craig. Nor any Lainie Kazans to hand out care packages. No *L.A. Times* reporters to tell of his plight. Certainly no caring mother to help him write his book. It's not known what contact, if any, Craig had with his family after his release from prison—the Smith family has maintained a policy of silence. Charles Gabriel Smith died on May 29th, 1978, at the age of 64 after suffering a stroke and aspiration pneumonia. Carole Smith outlived her husband by 20 years, passing away on April 18th, 1998 from respiratory failure caused by chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She was 82.

Ken Morgan ran into Craig again in the early 2000s in Santa Monica. "I gave him money to get something to eat," recalls Ken. "We sat and talked for a while, he and me and my friend, but he started rambling off at other stuff. You'd just run into him once in a while in different places. It was

weird. I'd see him in the Valley and then sometimes I'd see him in Santa Monica. I saw him in the Third Street Promenade. He'd even go into Venice once in a while."

Ken only vaguely remembers the subject of Craig's "rambling off." He thinks it may have had something to do with space aliens. More interesting is what it didn't have anything to do with: Maitreya Kali.

Craig's Maitreya Kali persona had been haphazardly, desperately constructed of eggshell-thin materials. Not surprisingly, it was soon trampled into brittle pieces by the marching feet of time, incarceration, and the punishing reality of day-today survival. All indications, too, are that Craig's mental condition was continuing to deteriorate. At a certain point he may no longer have had the capacity to bear the heavy load of a full-time messiah complex. By the end of the 1970s Maitreya had slipped beneath the surface to join the chorus of other voices in his head.



Craig Smith, June 7, 2010. (Photo: David Keeler)

25

CHASING GHOSTS

I live in the shadows
Silence my only company

In the year 2000 A.D., Craig Smith had not been crowned as King of the Planet, thereby saving Earth from destruction. That was about all I knew for sure in 2001 as I began my quest to find out more about this mysterious and obviously disturbed man and his music. I pored over the artwork of the *Apache* and *Inca* albums, deciphering clues that more often than not sent me chasing down blind alleys. But one by one, some of the pieces started to fall into place.

Before long, I had connected Craig's name to a group called the Penny Arkade. That discovery led me to Don Glut, who, after listening to the *Apache* and *Inca* albums, confirmed that many of the tracks were actually Penny Arkade recordings dating from 1967. Don tracked down Chris Ducey and Bobby Donaho who helped to fill in more of the story, as did their one-time producer Mike Nesmith. These developments ultimately resulted in a full Penny Arkade CD, *Not the Freeze*, released by Sundazed Music in 2004.

But Craig himself remained elusive. When I contacted the Glen Campbell Music Group in 2001, I learned that he'd stopped by their office to collect song-writing royalties for "Country Girl" as recently as the mid-1990s. The lady there didn't want to elaborate, but apparently some of the employees were a little spooked by his visits. Nevertheless, she seemed to regard Craig in a kindly way, and was impressed when I revealed more of his songwriting portfolio. She agreed to forward a letter from me to Craig's

last known address. I watched my mailbox hopefully for several weeks, but never received a reply.

In 2004, after exhausting all possible leads, I turn to a private investigator for help. His research confirms what I already knew: that Craig Smith was alive and most probably moving in and out of homelessness. Craig had no credit history under that name, a strong indication that he was living on the fringes of society—no loans, no credit cards, no automobile or property ownership. There was no record that he ever legally changed his name to Maitreya Kali. The investigator also found no criminal record for him. It will be another ten years before I find this information to be inaccurate.

The P.I. also provides me with a list of addresses associated with Craig during the previous 25 years. Along with the family house on Woodbridge Street, there are several apartments in the Studio City and North Hollywood area. I later drive by each of these addresses. All are rundown, low-rent places; all are in the vicinity of North Hollywood Park. Driving past the park in 2004, I spot a familiar silhouette in the distance and hit the brakes; it looks like Craig in the photo outside the temple at Pachacamac on the *Apache* poster. The car behind me honks, and, seeing no available parking spots, I drive on. Probably just my mind playing tricks on me.

More and more, I feel like I am chasing a ghost. Every time I feel like giving up, a new lead materializes—only to disappear like smoke when I reach out to grasp it.

In August 2004, the investigator comes up with a recent address for Craig—just a month old, in fact. Between May and July 2004, I learn, Craig was residing at the Mark Twain Hotel on Wilcox Avenue, just south of Hollywood Boulevard—about two blocks from the site of the Jade Café. It's a cheap, downtrodden hotel frequented by transients and the very poor (it has since been renovated). I call the front desk and speak to the clerk, who has only limited command of English. He confirms that Craig had lived there but checked out just a few weeks ago.

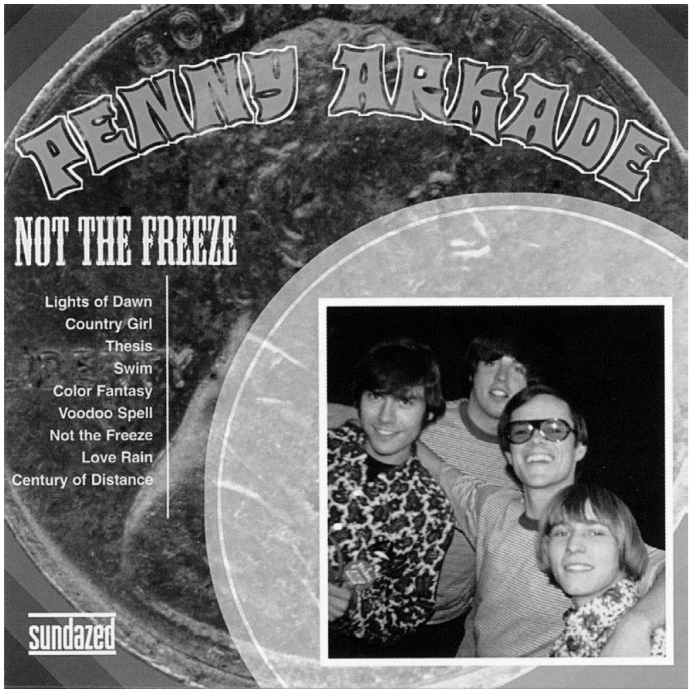
"He is a very good person," the man tells me, "but he is only 50/50—mental problems."

In an encouraging development he reveals that Craig is also "very nice guitarist," who sometimes plays his guitar on Hollywood Boulevard, collecting donations from passersby. I leave a message and a phone number

to be passed on to Craig should he return, explaining that I want to help him out. The man takes down my number but says he doubts Craig will call back, because, again, “he is only 50/50.” He also re-emphasizes that Craig “is a very good and nice person.” He promises to pass my message to Craig if he sees him and to encourage him to call me collect.

Of course, I never hear from him. Once again I’m left grasping blindly at empty space.

Much later, in 2014, I visit the archives of Los Angeles Superior Court in downtown L.A. and access Craig’s files. As a homeless person, Smith had numerous encounters with law enforcement as a matter of course. He was cited for a number of infractions and misdemeanor violations over the years, and a look through these gives us a small window into his life during the 1990s and 2000s (their misdemeanor records only go back to the late 1980s). It makes for depressing reading, falling into a familiar pattern of a citation, failure to appear, an arrest warrant being issued, arrest after a period of time, an inability usually to pay even the smallest fine, and then time in county jail.



On February 23rd, 1990, Smith was cited for having an open container of alcohol in public, an infraction. Surprisingly, in 1991 he was arrested in

Hollywood and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol. His blood alcohol level was 0.13. A charge of reckless driving was added for good measure. A couple of months later he was charged with a hit and run offense in Burbank. So not only was Craig drinking again, for a period of time he also had access to a vehicle, although court documents suggest that he had neither a license nor insurance. More missing puzzle pieces. Smith failed to appear in court and two separate arrest warrants were issued. After evading law enforcement for a couple of years, Craig was picked up, and ultimately served 12 days in county jail on the drunk driving charge and was again placed on probation. The hit and run charge, for which he also failed to appear, caught up with him at around the same time. After pleading no contest, he was sentenced to nine days and credited for time served.

In May 1995 Craig was charged with soliciting or agreeing to engage in an act of prostitution. Smith failed to appear for his arraignment in Van Nuys Courthouse, where he'd been sentenced to prison more than 20 years earlier. The charge caught up with him ten months later and he spent some time in custody while the case went through the courts. In February 1997 the charges were dismissed. Did Craig resort to prostitution? We don't know. Presumably he did whatever he needed to do to survive on the streets.

He stayed out of trouble until November 1999 when he was arrested on a petty theft violation, probably shoplifting. Predictably he failed to show for his arraignment in Van Nuys, and a bench warrant was issued with bail set at $20,000. A few months later Smith pleaded guilty and was fined $100 plus court costs. On this occasion he appears to have paid up.

Further misdemeanors on file speak to his homelessness. In August 2002 he was charged with camping or living in a public park in Santa Monica. Needless to say, he skipped out on his arraignment hearing, and it wasn't until two years later that he faced the Santa Monica Courthouse judge. For the grave offense of sleeping in the park, Craig was sentenced to 16 days in county jail and a fine of $100. He'd already spent 11 days in custody and was credited the additional five days for "good time/work time." The $100 fine was waived by the court.

Santa Monica cops caught up with Craig again in December 2004 when he was cited for sitting or lying down in the entrance to a downtown building between the hours of 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. In other words: sleeping

in a doorway at night. This one dragged out for over two years. The defendant failed to appear "without sufficient excuse," and a bench warrant was issued. In January 2007 Smith appeared in court and the charge was dismissed. Craig's next arrest wasn't until April 2011, another petty theft charge. After the usual failure to appear and bench warrant routine, he pleaded no contest and was sentenced to 30 days. The county jail would at least provide three meals a day and a roof over his head, which may have been better than his living situation on the outside.

The late Eric Caiden used to run the Hollywood Book & Poster shop on Hollywood Boulevard, not far from the Mark Twain Hotel. He used to see Craig on the street there in the early 2000s. "He always had this really scary expression on his face," Eric told me. "When I went to the post office sometimes he'd be outside there or hanging out across the street from the post office at that transient hotel there, the Mark Twain. I used to see people standing out front of there that were talking to themselves and were just real scary-looking, passing through or whatever. It was one of those places that —well, I'd rather sleep on the streets than go in that place, let's put it that way."

It was only after Eric saw pictures of Craig later that he recognized him. "I had no idea who he was. I wouldn't go up and talk to him or anything. He didn't seem to be talking to anybody, just staring at people and hanging out in front. A lot of times it looked to me like he didn't really know where he was. I don't think he ever had any idea what he was doing or where he was. It was really sad. I mean, obviously the mental illness just totally destroyed him, just took him apart."

Ric Menck, a friend and fellow musician and music historian, was another person who later identified Craig as the homeless person he'd seen on the streets. "I've been living in Studio City since 1997," he told me. "I saw Craig Smith hundreds of times but I had no idea who he was. He was sleeping in the laundry room of our apartment building for about a week until our landlord kicked him out."

Perhaps Craig was reliving older, happier memories as he roamed the streets of his old neighborhood. The laundry room where he sometimes slept was on Moorpark Street, about a block from where Craig used to visit the Clinger sisters and sing with them in their home.

Finding the ending becomes the beginning Kaleidoscope of change is due

It's not until 2010 that I make contact with Jim Roup, the Studio City resident who had sighted Craig on the streets numerous times since the early '80s. Every neighborhood in America—certainly in Southern California—seems to have at least one "homeless guy" who becomes a familiar part of the local landscape. In my neighborhood it's a fellow called Tony. In part of Studio City, it was Craig, although sightings of him were irregular and infrequent.

"I've seen Craig at various times for the last 30 years," Jim told me. "He has always looked disheveled and homeless-looking. He put on some weight and has lost some hair on his head. Sometimes he has a kind of Beatle haircut, when his hair is clean. He just stands around. I've never seen him talk to anybody. Once every six months I will run into him on Ventura Boulevard or on a bus maybe. I didn't know who he was until my friend Jeff at the Texaco station pointed out he was on records. Then I find out he went to school with the Morgan brothers and was a local Studio City dude."

Being a '60s music fan, Jim's curiosity was piqued and he began to attempt to engage Craig in conversation. "At first he did not want to talk to me at all," he recalls. "He would walk away from me. Then later he became more talkative when I would bring up people in the music business he knew."

Before long, I was receiving emails from Jim every few months, reporting on his or his friends' occasional encounters with Craig on the street. Craig was not always responsive, but over time he appeared to become more comfortable with the attention, on one occasion even autographing Jim's Good Time Singers LP. He also mentioned playing state fairs with the group. Occasionally he'd accept some money from Jim, but on only one occasion did he ever ask for any. At various times he chatted briefly about some of the musicians he'd worked with, including Jim Gordon, Hal Blaine, Glen Campbell, Andy Williams, Mike Post and Ed Cobb. "He told me once he had a falling out with Brian Wilson at Capitol over something," recounts Jim. "He also talked about doing the record with Heather MacRae and how he was a Laurel Canyon friend of Richie Furay. I

told him one time ‘Salesman’ was a good song. He told me, ‘No, I don’t think it was very good.’ He talked about ‘Not the Freeze’ too. He loved Joe Cocker’s *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*, and he asked where drummer Jimmy Gordon was. I did not elaborate to Craig about his sad fate.” When one of Jim’s friends told Craig how much he liked his music, Craig rolled his eyes and quipped, “That’s because I am talented.”

Brian Lally saw him, too. “He’d be walking around with a blanket on him, kind of dragging behind him,” he remembers. “He’d go into that Starbucks on the corner of Lankershim and Magnolia and he’d get a drink, and he’d just sit in there and just stare. He had that faraway stare.”

Now that I knew some of Craig’s regular haunts, I made a point of searching for him every time I was in Los Angeles, but he was never around when I was. Had I lived in the L.A. area I could have devoted more time to seeking him out, but I was 135 miles away in San Diego and my work and family commitments there didn’t allow me the luxury of any Jim Rockford-style stakeouts. By this point, Craig was certainly aware of my interest in talking to him and telling his story, but he had not been responsive.

Meanwhile, another fan of Craig's music, Mike Medina, had also been attempting to track his whereabouts. Mike spoke several times to an LAPD officer who patrolled the San Fernando Valley. According to the officer, he encountered Craig most often in the Studio City/North Hollywood area, often on Ventura Boulevard, but had also run into him unexpectedly in Van Nuys, Burbank or Sun Valley. He said that Craig didn't seem to frequent any of the regular homeless encampments or shelters. The officer would go weeks without seeing Craig and then he'd turn up and be around for a while before disappearing again.

The officer said that Craig didn't appear to be ravaged by drugs or alcohol but "definitely is not all there, mentally." He said that most of the time, Craig would be pleasant and reasonable, but on other occasions wouldn't respond to them at all, verbally or otherwise. These blank, unresponsive spells were also described by others who encountered Craig. One can only speculate, but the symptoms are highly suggestive of degenerative brain disease, which is often triggered by violent head trauma, and, particularly if untreated, can worsen considerably over time. One violent incident in Kandahar in 1968 was most likely the tipping point that sent Craig Smith's life on its slow downward spiral. A gradual homicide victim. In many ways maybe I really was searching for a ghost; the real Craig Smith had died back on that trail a long time ago.

But there were moments, days perhaps, of clarity for Craig. Susan Hannon manages a large apartment building on Fruitland Drive in Studio City. On April 17th, 2009, Craig stopped by there looking for an apartment to rent. "He came to my front door and I let him into my office," she remembers. "He was dressed rather like a wandering nomad in a kind of robe. It was brown and blue. He smelled really, really bad, but he was polite, and he was nice, he was kind, he was open. He said, 'I'm really looking for a place to live. I used to live up on Multiview.' In our neighborhood Multiview is like a street that has a lot of really, really nice homes on it. I said, 'Really?' He said, 'Yeah, I was a musician and that's why I'm looking for an apartment. Please don't think that because I'm dressed like this that I don't have any money. I do have money coming in.'"

In fact Craig did once live up on Multiview—in 1967. That home is now worth well over a million dollars. "So he did not appear to be on drugs or delusional," Susan continues, "but his outward appearance would suggest that he was having a moment of clarity. That's what was so incongruous. He was totally together. So I said, 'Oh, that's interesting!' He said, 'Yeah, I used to have a band and I get money from music and stuff, and that's the deal.' I didn't have any apartments available so I said, 'Well, leave me your phone number...' He said, 'Well, I don't have a phone number right now,' and I said, 'OK. You can always stop by.' And he said, 'OK.' And he left and everything was fine. But he was very disheveled, very dirty. It was kind of strange talking to somebody in a very logical manner who was just in such bad physical shape."

She went on to describe Craig's appearance in more detail. "He looked like he'd been out in the sun a long time. His hair was very long and blond and kind of wispy. You could see at one time he'd been a very nice-looking man. He was quite overweight—because as one of my other friends who lived on the streets told me, you get fed a lot of sweet food from people. I just thought it was odd that I'd never seen him before and I never saw him afterwards, yet some of my tenants told me, 'Oh yeah, I saw him all the time.' I just thought it was so odd."

This interaction with Susan Hannon must have been one of the rare moments when Craig was shown some genuine kindness and respect. Several of Susan's immediate family members have battled mental illness, so she could empathize with Craig's condition and she treated him like a human being. "The funny thing about it," she says, "was that I was so touched by it that I came in the next day and I Googled him. And sure enough..." Susan found a blog that reviewed the *Apache* and *Inca* albums and posted on the message board there. "I just kind of put a call out to say, 'Hey, this guy's wandering around. He needs some help. I just met him and I think somebody should try and take care of him.' I was kind of putting it out there." I saw the post, as did a number of other people. But Susan never saw Craig again. My search continued.

In September 2010 there was a breakthrough. My friend Chris Marsteller, who also plays guitar in our band the Loons, spent most of that summer working in North Hollywood, so I apprised him of the locations where Craig had been sighted and he agreed to keep an eye out for him. It took all summer, but finally one evening in September Chris spotted him outside the Pizza Man fast food restaurant on Lankershim Boulevard. By the time Chris had pulled over and parked, Craig had entered the restaurant, so Chris followed him inside. "I was apprehensive," remembers Chris. "I remember you warning me that you didn't know what his reaction might be, but the guy at the Pizza Man knew him. He wasn't afraid of him. He accepted Craig without even knowing more than what Craig was at that time: a gentle, broken man."

Chris introduced himself to Craig and handed him a copy of Sundazed's Penny Arkade CD and a recent issue of the magazine I publish, *Ugly Things*, and explained what each of them was. Craig smiled affably as Chris explained that we had been trying for so long to reach him so we could get

his story and help him out. “Yeah, yeah,” he smiled. Would he call Mike Stax at this phone number as soon as possible? “Yeah, yeah,” he smiled again.

Craig posed for a couple of photographs holding the CD and the magazine. He was wearing a T-shirt with photos of the two Bush presidents and the slogan “Dumb and Dumber.” By now he’d lost a lot of hair, but his smile revealed the same white, even teeth that had beamed out so winningly from American TV sets almost a half-century before.

“It was sad to see what he’d become,” reflects Chris. “I remember feeling like I hoped this wasn’t too humiliating for him. Hoping he didn’t feel like a freak at a freak show might feel. It was awkward. In the end I had accomplished what I had set out to do, but I hadn’t considered the consequence of the results, which was a sadness.”

I lived in hope of that phone call from Craig for some time, but deep down I knew it would probably never come.

I made a couple more visits to Craig’s neighborhood without sighting him, and Jim Roup’s encounters with Craig began to dwindle. My quest appeared to have reached yet another dead end. Finally, in August 2012, I decided to make one last attempt to find him. I compiled a map marked with all of the known addresses associated with Craig, as well as the spots where he had been sighted in recent years. I arrived in Studio City early one morning and set about visiting each one of them in turn as well as combing the surrounding streets and park areas.

I stopped first on Woodbridge Street, a quiet tree-lined street just off Coldwater Canyon Boulevard, a few blocks north of Ventura Boulevard. The house where Craig grew up has been torn down or remodeled. In its place is a quite large two-story home enclosed by a tall, leafy hedge. I get out of my car and stand awhile, half expecting Craig’s face to appear in one of the windows like some kind of spooked Boo Radley. But there’s no one to be seen. I’m chasing ghosts again.

It’s the same each place I go: a handful of low-rent apartments, all on side streets off of Ventura Boulevard, a cheap motel on Magnolia Boulevard where he often stayed (I later spot the same location in an episode of *The Rockford Files*), the liquor store where he’d sometimes buy food, the tiny Pizza Man restaurant, North Hollywood Park with its morning joggers and sweatsuited moms pushing strollers. I sit for more than an hour in the

nearby Starbucks, as Craig often did—until he'd sit too long, spacing out, and be asked to leave. I sip my coffee and scribble notes and corrections on the manuscript of this story, but most of the time my eyes are darting around, hoping to catch a glimpse of the man I am writing about. Today he doesn't seem to be around.

After several hours of fruitless searching, I take a break and head south on the Hollywood Freeway, exiting on Hollywood Boulevard. I drive by the landmark Capitol Records building, where Chris and Craig once recorded, make a quick detour past the seedy Mark Twain Hotel, then head west along Sunset through Hollywood to Beverly Hills. There I visit the Paley Center for Media, whose vast archive of television shows I know includes a video copy of the pilot episode of *The Happeners*. In their comfortable air-conditioned screening room I sit down and watch *The Happeners* for the very first time. I'm not sure what to expect, but I am impressed at just how good it is: the writing, the acting, the music, the cinematography, the production values—the entire look and feel of it.

And Craig. I've seen numerous photos of him, talked to many people who knew him, caught glimpses of him in video clips from *The Andy Williams Show*, listened to his music endlessly—this guy had been inside my head for more than a decade. But this is the first time I've seen him on film, center-stage, in motion, speaking, acting, playing guitar, singing. On film you can begin to get a sense of the real person: their facial expressions, their body language, the cadence of their voice, the way they interact with those around them, the way they express themselves. On that television monitor I saw for the first time the real Craig Smith. Here was the guy I'd been searching for all this time. I could now see in front of my eyes the charisma so many people described to me, his ease and confidence in front of the camera, his captivating singing, his sincerity, his goofy humor, his innate likeability, his star quality. Craig Smith, at that moment in time, looked like a guy who could have accomplished anything.

When the final credits had rolled, I tore back to Studio City, convinced that I would find him. But four hours later, standing beside the Los Angeles River at the spot where Woodbridge Street dead-ends, a few hundred yards from Craig's old home, I realize it's time to give up. Craig Smith is nowhere to be found. I've reached another dead end.

Eight weeks later, on October 11th, 2012, Mike Medina hits me with a bombshell. “I’m numb as I write this,” begins the email. “I found that Craig is deceased. He died on March 16th, 2012. He’s listed as an unclaimed person with the L.A. County coroner’s office.”

Where the trail ended. Outside the North Hollywood Community Center on Chandler Boulevard.

26

THRU A DREAM

Craig Smith saved the planet, did you? He died for a righteous cause

From the start I'd always held out hope that this story would have a happy ending. That if only I could find Craig Smith, I could help him get his life back on track: get him the medical help he needed, reconnect him with his songwriting royalties, arrange for legal reissues of all of his music.

Mike Medina and I had even fantasized about a benefit concert for Craig, maybe at the Troubadour, with a variety of new and old artists performing his music. The evening would end with Craig himself nervously mounting the stage to perform a few of his songs, and against all odds pulling it off. His old friends would be there looking on—Chris, Marvel, Heather, Jason, Suzannah, Nez, Bruce, Michael Storm, David Jackson, Cheryl. Grown men would be seen to weep discreetly as Craig's voice once again filled the room. A good old-fashioned Hollywood ending.

But in the real world there are no good old-fashioned Hollywood endings anymore. There never were. At least not like you see in the movies.

Craig Smith's body was found in North Hollywood Park, where he'd been living, on and off, for many years. The same park where he and Cheryl used to take walks. The same park where she had once run away from.

At the northeast corner of the park, along Chandler Boulevard, is the North Hollywood Community Center. Also known as the North Hollywood Recreation Center, it's a group of buildings and facilities including a gymnasium, tennis courts and a swimming pool. A tall steel flagpole stands

near the center of an expanse of concrete near the entrance to the main Community Center building. Two brick walls, about two feet high, snake around it, marking out a zigzag pathway. It was here, on the afternoon of March 16th, that Craig laid his sleeping bag on the concrete at the base of the flagpole and lay down to sleep. The walls offered some minimal concealment from pedestrians and passing patrol cars, which is presumably why he chose the hard concrete to bed down on rather than any of the park's grassy areas. Perhaps he no longer cared. Smith's health had been in a poor state for many months; he'd lost a lot of weight.

According to the coroner's report, at 4:50 p.m. an anonymous citizen noticed the body of what appeared to be a homeless man lying partially in a sleeping bag near the flagpole, and dialed 9-1-1. An emergency vehicle from the Los Angeles City Fire Department arrived at the location within three minutes and pronounced the subject dead. Police reported the case to the coroner's office, and an investigator visited the scene at 7:10. "At the time of the scene investigation, there was no available information as to who the decedent was or his medical history," noted his report.

Craig was wearing a blue and white jacket, a white T-shirt, green pants, white socks and white sneakers. At 7:20 p.m. his body was still warm to the touch and there were no signs of rigor mortis. "The decedent's hygiene is very poor," noted the scene investigator, "he is filthy. He is very thin with no obvious signs of trauma noted. Brown plaques were noted to the tongue."

An autopsy was performed the next day, and the cause of death was determined to be bronchopneumonia, group B streptococcus. The coroner noted that there was thick green pus in Craig's bronchi, trachea and the small airways of his lungs. A toxicology report showed no traces of drugs or alcohol, and there were no injuries to the body. "The manner of death is natural," concluded the medical examiner.

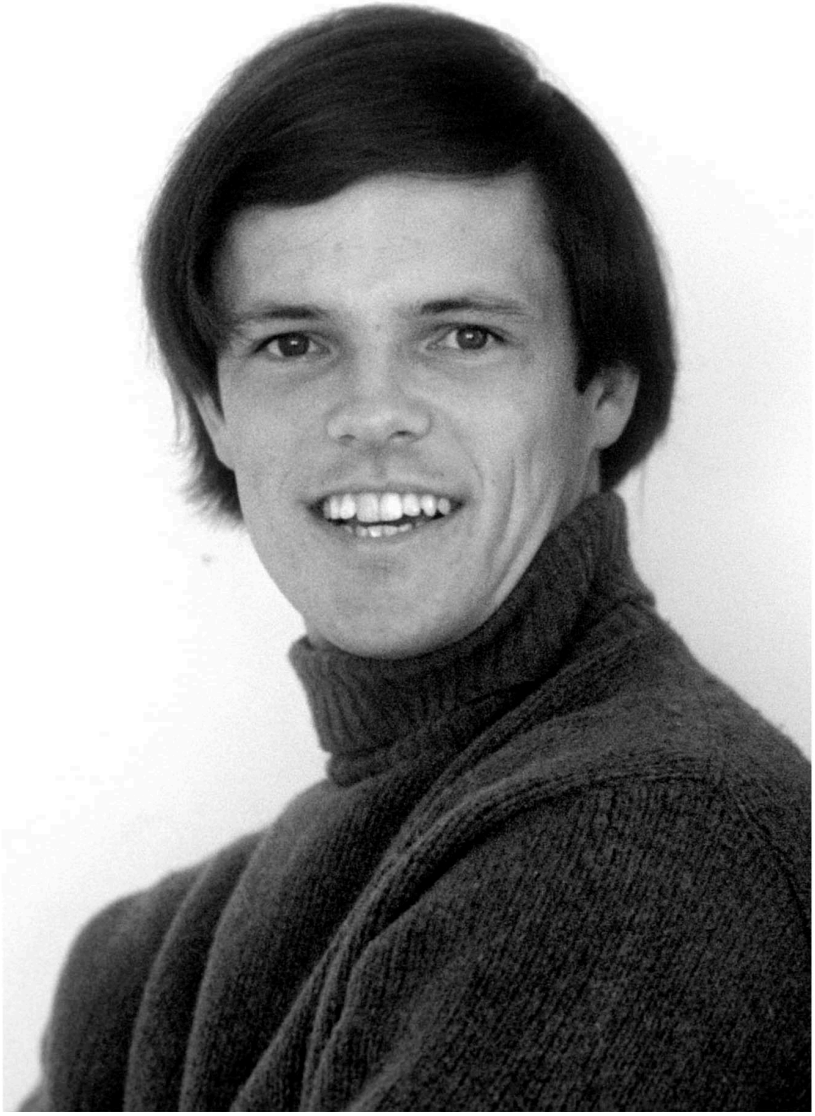
Natural. Just another day on the streets of L.A.

Craig Smith was 66 years old. The L.A. Coroner's office was unable to locate his next of kin so his remains were cremated and held at the L.A. County Crematory. If unclaimed after three years they would be buried in a common grave. I wanted to save Craig at least that final indignity. His family had resisted any attempts at contact. I was told they had nothing they wanted to say about Craig. Nevertheless, through a friend of a friend we

were able to get word to them. A few days later Craig's remains were listed as "released." The assumption that his family had collected Craig's remains gave me some small sense of relief. However, my assumption was misguided. The coroner's office later told me that one of his brothers had stopped by to collect Craig's meager belongings—ID cards, keys, a notebook, miscellaneous papers—but had declined to take his ashes.

Craig's death shook me. It shook me to the core. For a long time I struggled to find something positive to take from this experience. Had my search just been a colossal waste of time? If I had acted more quickly and decisively could the outcome have been different?

And what about Craig himself? What he had done to his mother was terrible; he'd brought untold distress and heartache to his family. But it still tore me up that a man who had once had so much talent and promise could die alone and unloved under such cruel circumstances. That his remains would continue to sit on a shelf unclaimed.



Craig Smith, May 10, 1967. (Photo: Henry Diltz)

27

OUT FROM THE BLACKENED VOID

Mystical Sam Pan Boat turns the other way
Out from the blackened void toward the light of day
Eyes open, born again, cycle starts anew
Magical Sam Pan Boat flows through me to you

It was music that started me on this long, strange journey to find Craig Smith. That search plunged me into an ocean of darkness and mystery that at times seemed impenetrable. The music was my compass as I swam deeper into the past. It helped me keep my bearings. It gave Craig a voice. It gave him shape and substance. It made him real to me. It gave my search meaning.

In the end, the music and a box of ashes was all that remained of Craig Smith.

It took several decades, but Craig's music was eventually rediscovered in the late 1980s. By the early 2000s the *Apache/Inca* LPs had gathered an almost mythical reputation among collectors and psychedelic aficionados. The bizarre album jackets with their cryptic schizophrenic notations give the records a sense of mystery and intrigue, and, along with the spoken-word/field recording snippets, an intimate, almost journal-like quality. But it's the music and the songwriting that give the albums such a uniquely appealing and timeless quality.

Three months before Craig's death, an original mint condition copy of the *Apache/Inca* double LP sold on eBay for over $10,000. Copies of the pirated reissue on Shadoks/Ten Little Indians continue to routinely sell for over $400. When Sundazed released a vinyl edition of the Penny Arkade's

Not the Freeze album for Record Store Day in 2015 it sold out within hours. The music endures.

English singer-songwriter Mary Epworth recorded a stark, haunting version of Craig's "Ice and Snow," which was released on her *Snow Queen* EP in 2012 and on a single in 2014. "I first came across Craig's music when I heard 'Isha' on '60s Jangle radio, a great online station that played sunshine pop and psych," she says. "I totally fell in love with the song, it seemed so mysterious and otherwordly, and wanted to find out more about the writers. I can't remember if I heard the Penny Arkade or Maitreya Kali next, but either way I really loved the space and beauty of the *Apache/Inca* recordings. They manage to sound so casual, and yet carry a huge weight of sadness and resignation. The lyrics and songwriting are hauntingly magical, and I love the way it's all buried inside that deep wash of reverb.

"A few years ago I decided to make an EP of Christmas/Winter songs, and we chose 'Ice and Snow,' partly as it's such a beautiful, tender, crystalline thing, and partly because I wanted an excuse to promote Craig's songs as much as possible. I tried to do a pretty faithful version.

"I've spent a bit of time in Los Angeles over the last few months," she adds, "and have of course seen many homeless people all over the city. At sunset on Venice Beach it was impossible to not think 'Any one of these guys could be a Craig Smith.' It hurts to think how much talent and brilliance and kindness and all the rest is lost inside a system that has no way of really helping."

Lost and unwanted. Craig Smith's remains sat on a shelf at the Los Angeles County Crematory. If unclaimed by the end of November 2015 they would be buried, along with many others, in an unmarked common grave. The coroner's office had told me that without a court order, the remains could only be released to a family member so their disposal in a mass grave now seemed a foregone conclusion.

I called the coroner's office one last time in early August. I wanted to know the exact date of the burial; it was a detail I needed for the story. This time they transferred me to the morgue. A lady there provided me with the date I needed. "So I would need a court order if I wanted to claim these remains?" I queried, already knowing the answer. "Actually…" she paused, apparently checking something. "No. Since it's been over two years that he's unclaimed, technically the remains can be released to anyone."

For a moment I was speechless. The entire storyline had shifted yet again. Craig Smith could win a last-minute reprieve. “How do I make this happen?” I asked her. I would need to obtain a permit for the removal and transportation of human remains, she explained, and to pay a mortuary service fee of $352.00. And I would need to take care of that before the end of November. It was that simple.

I immediately began making phone calls and shooting off emails to people who might want to help out covering the expense of this operation. It wasn’t that much money, but it was more than I had to spend at that particular time. Also I felt this might be an opportunity for some of Craig’s old friends to get some closure. All of them had unresolved feelings about him. Some of them had been hurt deeply by him; others felt that even though he’d all but forced them to turn their backs to him, they’d somehow let him down. I felt that if I could get ten or twelve people to contribute 20 or 30 dollars each, I could make up the balance and get this done. And even if no one gave me a cent, I was going to get it done anyway, one way or another. After 15 years, I was as emotionally invested in this as anyone.

People stepped up immediately. Michael Storm and Dave Jackson of the Good Time Singers each threw down 50 bucks. Sidonie (Suzannah) Jordan of The Happeners sent 30 dollars, as did Jason Laskay and Chip Douglas. Patsy, Debra and Melody Clinger each donated that amount. Bruce Barbour mailed me a crisp new $100 bill. Susan Hannon, the apartment building manager who’d only met Craig once, sent some money. My research assistants Mike Medina and Richard Deuel contributed, as did several others who, like me, never knew Craig but loved his music: Alex Carretero of Guerssen Records, and Nemo from Time-Lag Records. Even Cheryl Starsong, Craig’s one-time girlfriend, whom he had parted with under such emotionally charged circumstances, helped out, as did her friend Dyane Quinn. They all wanted to do the right thing, and it all came together extremely quickly.

On August 25th, 2015, I awake before sunrise, get into a rental car and head for Los Angeles. I want to be at the Department of Health in downtown L.A. as soon as it opens at 8 a.m. I leave home a little after 5 a.m., and park my car in their lot at 8:05. (*Right on. Schedule*) The Application and Permit for Disposition of Human Remains is simple to fill out. Until I reach the box marked “Relationship to Deceased.” I pause, then

write “friend.” I hand the form in to the clerk, a black guy about my age with a shaved head and a white bebop goatee. He takes it away to process, and returns five minutes later with the completed paperwork. I pay the fee of $13.75, sign the forms in quadruplicate, and he paper-clips them together and slides them into a manila envelope. He looks me in the eye: “You’re doing a good thing for your friend,” he tells me. “Sorry for your loss.” I thank him, take the envelope, and head back to my car.

My next stop is the Los Angeles County Morgue, which is located in the basement of L.A. General Hospital. The hospital covers a couple of city blocks so it takes me a while to find the right building and then the right elevator to take me down. Down in the basement it’s deserted except for a few employees, mostly janitors rolling mops and buckets or steel cabinets containing who knows what. I wander the corridors lined with oppressive steel doors, looking for the right one: CIG-130. I expect a sign to read “Morgue,” but instead it’s marked “Decedent Services.” Behind the anonymous white-painted steel door is a small, windowless office with four desks and one clerk. She’s on the phone with another customer. After a short wait she puts her call on hold and I hand her the completed paperwork. She tip-taps at her keyboard then asks, “Do you have a letter from the brother?” A moment of concern. “No. I was told I didn’t need…” “Oh yeah, right.” I write out a check. She taps again at her keyboard, inserts some blank letterhead in her printer and prints out and signs the letter of permission. The remains aren’t here; they’re at a crematorium a few miles away. “Is that where they’ve been for the past three years?” I ask her. “Yes.” She hands over the paperwork and some printed directions, and I thank her. No words of encouragement here. For her it’s just another day.

I drive next to the Los Angeles County Crematory in Boyle Heights. It’s situated in a parcel of land adjoining Evergreen Cemetery, a huge, rather grim graveyard surrounded by a tall chain link fence topped with barbed wire. Its name couldn’t be more ironic: due to a severe drought Evergreen’s expansive lawns haven’t seen water in a long time; every blade of grass is brown, dead.

The County Crematory, though, is an entirely separate entity, a small oasis fenced off in its southeast corner. Here the grass is green and well-tended, there are large shade trees, and squirrels scamper around the lawns. It’s almost idyllic. I park and a tall, black caretaker hails me from outside of

one of the buildings. He's expecting me. I walk over then follow him into a small chapel. There's an inexpensive, bronze-colored plastic coffin, and behind that a wooden lectern with a large book open upon it. The caretaker shows me the imposing book with its columns of names and figures, all neatly handwritten in black ink—a list of the dead from just a few months of early 2012. I spot the name Craig Vincent Smith right away, near the top of the page. Next to it are columns indicating the dates of his birth, his death, and his cremation, as well as his race and gender. And on the far right a space for a signature, indicating someone has taken possession of the remains. The caretaker marks an x there, and I sign my name. There are only two other signatures on the page.

Next the caretaker shows me a box, wrapped in brown paper. He opens the flap at one end to reveal a sticker with Craig's name and date of cremation. "Is that your friend?" he asks. I confirm it is and he hands the box over. It's heavier than I expect.

He asks me if I have any questions, and we talk for a while. The box with Craig's ashes, he explains, had been stored in the room adjoining this one, along with hundreds of others. In a few months all the remains from 2012 would be buried together in a plot a few hundred yards away. In their containers; like this one? I ask. No, just all poured in together. It was at that moment that the real import of what I was doing hit me, and I started to choke up. How many people? I manage to ask. About 1,500 each year. Who are they? Men, women, children, babies—but most of them, about two-thirds, are men. Some were just unclaimed, they had no living relatives, or their relatives lived out of state and couldn't travel; some, like Craig, were homeless; a few were John Does—though not many anymore due to modern technology. Others were just too poor to afford any other kind of burial.

By now the supervisor has wandered in and joined the conversation, a genial older black gentleman called Albert. He's been working here since the late '70s. They ask who my friend was and I tell them a little bit about Craig, that he was a gifted musician and a songwriter whose songs had been recorded by Andy Williams, Glen Campbell and the Monkees. The Monkees they've heard of—Andy Williams and Glen Campbell they're not so sure about. But they're interested. The tall caretaker tells me he's going to Google Craig's name when he gets off work. I get the impression that my

visit was a bright spot in their day. It's a rarity for someone's remains to be claimed at such a late date. Albert leads me outside and we walk across the grass together to the spot where the decedents from 2012 will be buried. A simple rectangular plaque marked "2011" sits atop the plot next to it. They'd recently had to shovel on a fresh layer of earth, he explains, because the ashes had settled causing the plot to sink down a few inches. The plots stretch all the way back to the fence line, back to at least the 1950s. Some have additional markers with names, dates and other inscriptions; others have flowers, even plastic toys. Not all of those buried here are forgotten. The burial ceremony in December of each year is solemn and respectful, he tells me. It's attended by local dignitaries and media people; occasionally a couple of grieving relatives are in attendance.

I thank him, and carry the box out to my car and place it carefully in the trunk. It's hard to relate this anonymous brown paper-wrapped package to the man I've been searching for all these years. This is Craig Smith. In a plastic box in the trunk of my rental car. I'd found him much too late.

Next to the crematorium with its ominous brick chimney is a small rose garden with a broken-down drinking fountain in the center. I sit down on a bench and reflect. In this slightly elevated section of the crematory, the searing summer heat is tempered by a light breeze. To my right and behind me, the city of Los Angeles, Craig's city, stretches for miles into the distance like some vast circuit board humming with energy and life. To my left and in front of me, the green lawns and rustling trees of the crematory grounds: serene, filled with untold secrets.

The past is a vast ocean that moves beneath all of our lives. In my long journey to find Craig Smith and discover the secrets of Maitreya Kali, I had swum deep beneath its surface, retrieving fragments of his life piece by piece then attempting to place them into their true pattern. Completing the entire puzzle was impossible. Many of his secrets lay deeper than I could ever reach, darker than I dared to swim. But now, in rescuing that box of ashes, in many ways my journey had reached its end—or more like a kind of new beginning. Sitting in the stillness of that crematory garden I experienced the very real sensation of breaking that vast ocean's surface and breathing in fresh air again. My search for Craig Smith, my swim through the darkness, had in some ways been a wasted journey. By the time I found him, it was too late for there to be any kind of happy resolution. But

in telling his story, surely there was still some kind of redemption to be found for this poor, lost, tragic, lonely soul.

I like to think Craig Smith felt the first stirrings of that redemption while he was still alive. My mind returns to the photo my friend had taken of Craig in 2010, holding the Penny Arkade CD and the magazine. Maybe as Craig studied these items later, they helped him realize that there *were* people out there who cared about him. That the music and the message he'd so desperately floated out to sea in a bottle on the *Apache* and *Inca* LPs more than 40 years ago had at last reached sympathetic ears. That his songs had lasting value and would continue to be heard.

Maybe that realization helped Craig Smith, if only for a few moments, to find some kind of peace. Maybe then the long years of pain and struggle and loneliness could be forgotten, and the voices in his head silenced again by the songs in his heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this book has been a long and sometimes difficult journey. Fortunately, I didn't have to make it alone. My wife Anja was beside me every step of the way. Her love and support were unwavering, and I doubt I could have covered the full distance without her.

The story told here started out as a feature article for *Ugly Things* magazine, which appeared in Issue #36 in 2013. Response from readers was so overwhelming that I decided to expand it into a book. In digging deeper I uncovered many more crucial details about Craig Smith's life that did not appear in the magazine article and the story took on a much broader scope.

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Aside from his music and his enigmatic album cover notes, Craig Smith was never able to tell his own story to the world so I relied on the recollections of those who crossed paths with him at different stages of his life—friends, lovers, colleagues, musical collaborators, and some who only had incidental contact but nonetheless helped fill in missing pieces of the

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Process Media
1240 W. Sims Way
Suite 124
Port Townsend, WA 98368

www.processmediainc.com